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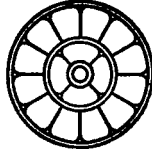
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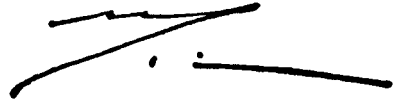


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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DOING YOGA

A QUESTION TO THE MOTHER AND AN UNPUBLISHED REPLY BY SRI AUROBINDO

Mother,

I do not know at all what your Yoga is, so where is the question of doing Yoga? I do not even have any idea about Yoga and I also do not know what to do about it.

Kamala

THERE are two ways of doing Yoga, one by knowledge and one's own efforts, the other by reliance on the Mother. In the last way one has to offer one's mind and heart and all to the Mother for her Force to work on it, call her in all difficulties, have faith and bhakti. At first it takes time, often a long time, for the consciousness to be prepared in this way—and during that time many difficulties can come up, but if one perseveres a time comes when all is ready, the Mother's Force opens the consciousness fully to the Divine, then all that must develop develops within, spiritual experience comes and with it the knowledge and union with the Divine.

(Probably early 1930s)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Given by Champaklal)

THE MOTHER'S COMMENTARIES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S *THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES*

COMPILED FROM HER TALKS TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN,
1956-1957, IN A NEW TRANSLATION BY SHRADDHAVAN

(Continued from the issue of October 1987)

Chapter 16: THE CHAIN, Part Three

Weakness puts the same test and question to the strengths and energies and greatnesses in which we glory. Power is the play of life, shows its degree, finds the value of its expression; weakness is the play of death pursuing life in its movement and stressing the limit of its acquired energy.

Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors.

NATURALLY, we wonder what this secret is, towards which pain leads us. To a superficial and incomplete understanding it might appear that the soul is seeking the pain itself. But that is not it at all. The very nature of the soul is the divine Delight that is constant, invariable, unconditioned, ecstatic. But it is true that if one can face pain with courage, endurance and unshakable faith in the divine Grace, if instead of running away from suffering when it comes to you, you can enter into it with the will, the aspiration to pass beyond it into the luminous Truth, the unchanging Delight which is at the heart of all things, the door of pain is often more direct, more immediate than the way of satisfaction or contentment.

I don't mention pleasure, for that turns its back constantly and almost totally on this deep divine Delight. Pleasure is a perverse and deceptive disguise that deflects us from our goal, and we should certainly never seek it if we are eager to find the truth. Pleasure dissipates us, it deceives us, it leads us astray. Pain brings us back to a profounder truth by obliging us to concentrate in order to be able to endure, to be able to face this crushing thing. If you are strong, it is in pain that you regain your true strength most easily. In pain you most easily regain your true faith—the faith in something that is above and beyond all pain.

When you are enjoying yourselves and you forget; when you take things

as they come; when you try to avoid being serious, looking life in the face; when you try to forget, to forget that there is a problem to be solved, that there is something to be discovered, that there is a reason why we exist and live, that we are not here just to pass our time and go away without having learned or done anything—then you are really wasting your time, you are missing the opportunity that has been given us, this opportunity that I will not call unique but wonderful, of an existence which is the place for progress, the moment in eternity when you can discover the secret of life. For this physical, material existence is a wonderful opportunity, a possibility that is given to you to discover the reason for life, to help you take a step towards that deep truth, to help you discover the secret that will give you a contact with the eternal ecstasy of the divine life.

(*Silence*)

I have often told you that to seek out pain and suffering is a morbid attitude that should be avoided; but to run away from them, by forgetfulness, by a frivolous, superficial movement, by distraction, is cowardice. When pain comes, it is to teach us something. The quicker we learn it, the less it is needed. And once we know the secret, it will no longer be possible for us to suffer, for that secret reveals the reason, the cause, the origin of suffering, and the way to pass beyond it.

The secret is to get out of the ego, to escape from its prison, to unite with the Divine, merge with him, to allow nothing to separate us from him. So once you have discovered this secret and realised it in your being, pain has lost its purpose and suffering disappears. This is the all-effective remedy: not only in the deeper parts of the being, in the soul and in the spiritual consciousness, but also in life and in the body. There is no illness, no disorder that can survive the discovery of this secret when it is put into practice, not only in the higher parts of the being, but also in the cells of the body.

If we can communicate to them the splendour that lies within them, if we can make them comprehend the reality by which they exist, which gives them existence, then they too enter into the universal harmony; then the physical disorder which causes illness vanishes like all other disorders of the being.

But for this, you must not be fearful nor a coward. When some physical disorder comes to you, you must not be afraid. You mustn't run away from it, you must face it with courage, with calm, confidence, with the certainty that illness is a *falsehood*, and that if you turn entirely, in full trust, with complete calm, to the divine Grace, It will enter into your cells just as It enters into the depths of your being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.

13.2.1957

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 14 NOVEMBER 1956

Mother, how can one conquer the desire to appear good in the eyes of others?

OH, Lord!... To appear good in others' eyes, to have public approval? Is that it?

First, the best way is to ask oneself why one values others' approval. For what particular reason, because there are many reasons.... If you have a career and your career depends on the good opinion others have of you, then that's a utilitarian reason. If you have a little, or much, vanity and like compliments, that's another reason. If you attach great value to others' opinion of you because you feel they are wiser or more enlightened or have more knowledge, that's yet another reason. There are many others still, but these are the three chief reasons: utility, vanity—usually this is the strongest—and progress.

Naturally, when it is a reason of progress, the attitude is not quite the same, for instead of trying to make a good impression, one must first endeavour to know the impression one is actually making, in all humility, in order to profit by the lesson this gives. That is quite rare, and in fact, if one isn't too naive, one usually attaches importance only to the opinion of those who have more experience, more knowledge and more wisdom than oneself. And so that leads us straight to one of the best methods of cure. It is precisely to come to understand that the opinion of those who are as ignorant and blind as ourselves cannot have a very great value for us from the point of view of the deeper reality and the will to progress, and so one stops attaching much importance to that.

Finally, if one is sincere one desires no other approval except that of one's teacher, one's guru or of the Divine Himself. And that's the first step towards a total cure of this little weakness of wishing to make a good impression on people. Now, if the movement comes from a motive of utility, the one I spoke of first, the question does not arise here, for here we do not depend upon the opinion others have of us, either for living or for our development. So there remains the most frequent instance, the one most difficult to cure: that kind of small, very foolish vanity which makes you like to be complimented and dislike being criticised. So the best way is to look at yourself, to see how very ridiculous you are, petty, paltry, stupid and all that, to laugh a little at yourself and resolve how, to do without the compliments of others.

That is all I have to offer.

It is obvious that if it is a matter of yoga, of yogic discipline, an indispensable preliminary condition is to free oneself from this little stupidity of wanting to be appreciated by others. That is not the first step on the path, it is one of the first steps in the preparation for being able to enter on the path. For so long as

one needs to be appreciated and complimented, one is a slavish being and a deplorable weakling.

Indeed, it is better not to care at all about what others think of you, whether it is good or bad. But in any case, before reaching this stage, it would be less ridiculous to try to find out the impression you make on others simply by taking them as a mirror in which you see your reflection more exactly than in your own consciousness which is always over-indulgent to all your weakness, blindness, passions, ignorance. There is always quite a charming and pleasant mental explanation to give you a good impression of yourself. But to conclude, when you have the chance of getting information that's a little more trustworthy and reliable about the condition you are in, it is better not to ask the opinion of others, but only to refer all to the vision of the guru. If you really want to progress, this is the surest path.

There we are. Is that all?

Mother, I had a question. The control of one's own movements and the control of the vast life around oneself—are these interdependent or independent?

Self-control and the control of what surrounds you?... That depends on your standpoint. The police superintendent, for instance, has a certain control over the circumstances around him, but he doesn't usually have much self-control!
(Laughter)

What exactly do you want to know?

To understand the meaning of "control over the vast life around it."¹

Oh! it is a phrase from the book!

It is quite obvious that one must first begin by self-control, otherwise one has no effect on the surroundings except to increase the confusion.

To give an example, Vivekananda had no control over his own anger, but he had great control over the life around him.

This is the first time I've heard that. He had no control over his anger? Who told you that story?

It is in his biography.

Did he say it himself? Is it authentic, this story?

(Another disciple) *Yes, sometimes he used to get carried away.*

But he knew it himself?

¹ A phrase from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p 172.

Yes, he knew it.

Anyway, he did not have a "great control" over his surroundings: he had a great influence, which is something very different. One can't control outer matter if one does not control inner matter, for they are the same thing. But he had an influence, which is quite different. It is not a mastery, it is an influence. That is, he could awaken certain movements in others, but he could not control them, it was they who had to control themselves with the awakening, it was not—I say "he", it can be anyone you see, it is a general rule.

Besides, it is childishly simple, for mastery means the knowledge of handling certain vibrations; if you know how to handle these vibrations you have the mastery. The best field of experimentation is yourself: first you have the control in yourself and once you have it in yourself you can transmit the vibration to others, to the extent you are capable of identifying yourself with them and of thus creating this vibration in them. And if you cannot handle a vibration in yourself, you don't even know the procedure; you don't even know what to do, so how can you manipulate it in others? You may encourage them by words, by an influence over them, to do what is needed to learn self-control, but you cannot control them directly.

To control something, a movement, is simply to replace by one's presence, without words or explanations, the bad vibration by the true one. This is what constitutes the power of mastery. It does not lie in speaking, in explaining; with words and explanations and even a certain emanation of force, you may have an influence on someone, but you do not control his movement. The control of the movement is the capacity to oppose the vibration of this movement by a stronger, truer vibration which can stop the other one... I could give you an example, you know, a very easy one. Two people are arguing in front of you; not only are they arguing, but they are on the point of coming to blows; so you explain to them that this is not the thing to do, you give them good reasons for stopping and they come to a stop. You will have had an influence on them. But if you simply stand before them and look at them and send out a vibration of peace, calm, quietude, without saying a word, without any explanation, the other vibration will no longer be able to last, it will fall away of itself. That is mastery.

The same thing applies to the cure of ignorance. If you need words to explain something, that is not true knowledge. If I have to say all that I do say for you to understand me, that is not mastery, it is simply that I am able to exercise an influence on your intelligence and help you to understand and awaken in you the desire to know and discipline yourselves, etc. But if by looking at you, without saying anything I am not able to make the light enter into you, the light which will make you understand, I won't have mastered the movement or the state of ignorance. Do you understand this?

So I can tell you with certainty that at least in this matter, if it is historically correct that Vivekananda had movements of anger which he could not control, that is, that he was carried away either in word or action, well, in this matter he was incapable of controlling those around him. He could only awaken similar vibrations in them, and so probably justify their weakness as regards this. He could say to them in so many words "Above all, don't fly into a temper", but that is no use at all. It is the eternal "Do what I say, not what I do." But that has no effect.

(*Silence*)

Mother, the problem comes up in our class.

Oh! oh! you get into a temper with your students? (*Laughter*)

To control and discipline them, what should one do if one has no self-control?

Then one can't! (*Laughter*)

But the way you describe it, this control will take a whole lifetime!

Oh! what a pity! (*Laughter*)

But how can you hope... Let us see, you have an indisciplined, disobedient, insolent pupil; well, that represents a certain vibration in the atmosphere which, besides, is unfortunately very contagious; but if you yourself do not have within you the opposite vibration, the vibration of discipline, order, humility, of a quietude and peace which nothing can disturb, how do you expect to have any influence? You are going to tell him that this should not be done?—Either that will make things worse or he will make fun of you!

Usually...

And if by chance you don't have any control yourself and become angry, then it's finished! You lose for ever all possibility of exercising any authority over your students.

Teachers who are not perfectly calm, who do not have an endurance that never fails, and a quietude which nothing can disturb, who have no self-respect—those who are like that will get nowhere. One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must be a great yogi to be a good teacher. One must have a perfect attitude to be able to exact a perfect attitude from the students. You cannot ask anyone to do what you don't do yourself. That is a rule. So look at the difference between what is and what ought to be, and you will be able to estimate the extent of your failure in class.

That is all I can offer you.

And I may add, since there's the occasion for it: we ask many students here when they grow up and know something, to teach others. There are some, I believe, who understand why; but there are also others who think it is because it is good to serve in some way or other and that teachers are needed and we are happy to have them. But I tell you—for it is a fact—that I have never asked anyone educated here to give lessons without seeing that this would be for him the best way of disciplining himself, of learning better what he is to teach and of reaching an inner perfection he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this opportunity of disciplining himself, which is *exceptionally* severe. Those who succeed as teachers here—I don't mean an outer, artificial and superficial success, but becoming truly good teachers—this means that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, controlling their movements, capable of a clear-sightedness, an understanding of others and a never-failing patience.

If you go through that discipline and succeed, well, you have not wasted your time here.

And I ask all those who accept to give lessons, to accept it in that spirit. It is all very well to be kind and do some service and be useful; that is good of course, a very good thing; but it is only one aspect and perhaps the least important aspect of the problem. The most important one is that it is a Grace given to you so that you can achieve self-control, an understanding of the subject and of others which you could never have acquired but for this opportunity. And if you have not benefited from this all these years you have been teaching others, it means that you have at the very least wasted half your time.

(Silence)

Is that all? Convinced? You are going to set to work!

(Another disciple) *Mother, what you have said concerns each teacher, his inner attitude.*

Yes.

But concerning the outer organisation of the school, how do you want it to be done—because at the moment there are many disputes among the teachers.

Disputes! Not too many, I hope!

Discussions. (Laughter)

How do I want it?

I can tell you things in general, you see, but the details of the organisation...
What is your problem?

So far what you have said about the University¹ consists of general ideas, but what about the details?

Yes...

There are many differences of opinion; so what is the true way you want us to follow?

But excuse me, first you must tell me from what point of view. "Organisation" is very vague, isn't it? If it is about the courses of study, that's quite a formidable subject which can't be settled just like that. If it is the method of teaching, that is something quite personal—personal in both cases. The general plan is easy, that is, it has been given quite clearly; but unless you give me an instance about which, let us say, there is some discussion and different opinions...

For example, let us take one point, Mother. You have said that the student must be given full freedom. Now, some interpret this as meaning that there should be no fixed classes, for the student should be left free to do what he likes, to come to the class or not as he likes, etc. So in this case, there should not be fixed hours for each class. And in this case the organisation becomes very complicated—how to arrange the classes?

Quite impossible! But when did I say that the student must be left free to come or not?...

Excuse me, you must not confuse things. I have said and I repeat that if a student feels quite alien to a subject, for example, if a student feels he has an ability for literature and poetry and has a distaste or at least an indifference for mathematics, if he tells me, "I prefer not to follow the mathematics course", I can't tell him, "No, it is absolutely necessary to go to it." But if a student has decided to follow a class, it is an absolutely *elementary* discipline that he follows it, goes to it regularly and behaves himself properly there; otherwise he is *altogether unworthy* of going to school. I have never encouraged anyone to roam about during class-hours and to come one day and be absent the next, never, for, to begin with, if he can't submit to this quite elementary discipline, he will never acquire the least control over himself, he will always be the slave of all his impulses and all his fancies.

¹ The Ashram School was originally named Sri Aurobindo International University Centre; later the name was changed to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

If you don't want to study a certain branch of knowledge, that is all right, no one can compel you to do it; but if you decide to do something—anything in life, if you decide to do a thing—you must do it *honestly*, with discipline, regularity and method. And without whims. I have never approved of anyone being the plaything of his own impulses and fancies, never, and you will never be able to have that from me, for then one is no longer a human being, one is an animal. So, here is one of the questions quite settled, without any discussion.

Now, another problem?

That will be for next time! (Laughter)

Good. Let us keep it for another time. We shall stop here.

(Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 347-357)

VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 1987)

THE RECOVERY

X WAS a teenager studying in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He was a keen athlete and gymnast. One day during a wrestling match his opponent knocked him down. Alas, his neck broke affecting the spine. The Mother who was in the Tennis Ground came and Dr. Sanyal took charge. He tried to set the neck but was unable to do it. He declared that X should be at once taken to Madras to a specialist. Luckily there was one in Madras who had treated any number of such cases during the Second World War.

X's body below his neck was paralyzed. For one month he was kept in traction. He could not even pass urine without a catheter. This sort of injury usually takes a long time to heal. The surgeon said he had never seen such a case as X's. Things were progressing in an unexpectedly fast way. The surgeon neither knew the Mother nor had any faith in God but he said, "It is clear that some Other Force is working in this case."

After one month X was allowed to be brought to Pondicherry. His neck was in plaster, his lower body was still paralyzed. The doctor had said it would take six months for X to be able to sit a little.

In Pondicherry X kept asking all the time to see the Mother. His father informed the Mother. The Mother consented to come and see X, on her way to the Tennis Ground. X was overjoyed. At the appointed time the Mother came and showered her love on X. When she was about to leave X asked pleadingly, "When will you come again, sweet Mother?" The Mother replied, "It is no use my coming to see you in this condition. I'll come when you have made some progress." This hope, this challenge spurred X to make a great effort. He tried and tried to sit. If he could report to the Mother that he could sit, surely she would come to see him. He was ready to attempt the impossible just to see her for a few minutes. Day and night he tried and then the miracle happened. Instead of the six months the doctor had said it would take him, X could sit within a few days. Jubilantly he informed the Mother and as she had promised she came and congratulated him on his progress. The Mother remarked, "Next time I'll come when you can eat with your own hands." For a person who is paralyzed it is very difficult to hold a spoon, leave aside the tremendous coordination needed to lift it to the mouth. But with hope and courage all is possible. For a glimpse of the Mother the boy tried with all his might to train his hands to raise a spoon to his mouth. All his waking moments he practised it. In a few days he could eat a spoonful or two of food by himself.

The Mother was informed and again she came. Though in her presence X could not carry the spoon upto his lips, the Mother praised him for this quick progress and said, "I'll come again when you can walk."

X set out to achieve this new goal. After intense effort and practice he could take a few steps with support. And the Mother was informed.

She came to reward the extraordinary effort and victory and at leave-taking remarked, "Now I'll not come to you, you will come to me." X could not believe his ears. He asked, "How can I come, Mother?" The Mother replied, "Why? you can walk now," X queried, "Where should I come, Mother?" "Come to the Tennis Ground," the Mother replied.

With a renewed vigour X put his soul into his efforts. And within a few days by the Mother's Grace and his extraordinary will he could go to the Tennis Ground. There the Mother asked him to exercise on one side while she played Tennis. He used to exercise with a sand-bag on his head.

Within one month of his coming to Pondicherry X could run.

Compiled by S

MY DREAM-BOAT

THERE is a sea east of the rising sun
 And I would in a dream-boat with orange sails
 And with a heart whose joy is the starry breeze
 Reach the cool waters of the rippleless sleep.
 Lo, the magic spell of beckoning sounds
 Suddenly enlarging into a silence
 Of seeing sight as if wonder-struck withdrew
 The gleaming shores into a wideness of the Unseen!
 I have become the song of shadowless tunes,
 I have become the moon without the night;
 The twilight is crossed in reveries of the True.
 Now like a bird attracted by the upper winds,
 Or like a day adrift on the stream of hues,
 Across the horizonry of our thoughts,
 In golden thrust of the invisible name,
 To distant-most birth is my dream-boat a-sail.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

IT WAS ALL OVER IN FIVE MINUTES

THEY both belonged to two very distinguished families. Since her childhood X had a yearning for the Divine. Something in her heart knew that she was meant for a spiritual life. Thus she was a difficult child to understand. Her mother wanted her to marry. X's father told his wife, "Why do you want to marry her off? Will she be able to adjust to a married life?" X who was very tender didn't want to disappoint her mother but made a strange condition. She told her mother, "If I marry, it will be only to please you. But I will never leave my home. My husband will have to come and live here."

As destiny would ordain it, a young author, a political compatriot of her brother, came to that town. A match was proposed and in a very natural way X's condition was fulfilled and the marriage was solemnised.

X's husband and brother subscribed to politics of a radical brand. Once her brother visited the Ashram. He was won over by the Divine Mother, materialism notwithstanding. Following his lead next year X along with her husband and parents came to the Ashram and had the Mother's Darshan. In her words, "It was all over in five minutes." Henceforth they belonged to the Mother.

X's husband who had earlier found it difficult to adjust this new faith in Divinity to his faith in his political creed, found his conflict gone, for he knew he had seen the Divine face to face. He had many interests in life, besides being a budding author. After this fateful first Darshan of the Mother he told his wife, "We will come and live here in our old age."

X had a clearer outlook. She asked her husband, "What will we have in our old age to offer to the Divine?" In a flash X's husband saw the truth in what his wife had said. He agreed. Their whole destiny changed.

After arranging their affairs they joined the Ashram to reside sheltered in the Divine's arms. Truly the past was all over in five minutes, a great future begun.

Compiled by K

**FROM BERTRAND RUSSELL AND
G. LOWES DICKINSON**

TWO LETTERS TO DILIP KUMAR ROY*

London, 18.10.1922

Dear Mr. Roy,

Of course I remember you very well at Lugano. I will do my best to answer your question which is one that has often and anxiously occupied my thoughts.

On the balance, if I were in your position, I think I should take to music whole-heartedly and give to politics only so much as is compatible with that. I do not believe that people can, in the long run, be useful if they thwart their nature too much. I have observed often that the sacrifice of some strong fundamental impulse to a cause tends to make people fanatical and ruthless, so that in the end they do more harm than good. One may expect to prove oneself an exception, but that is rare. For myself I have adopted a compromise: I give about half my time to speaking and writing on practical affairs, and about half to the abstract pursuits that my nature loves.

Then you may look at the matter another way. Assume that with the course of time, India achieves her freedom; you would wish that there should be people in India capable of producing a fine civilization. This will not be the case if those with capacity for things other than politics have meanwhile neglected their gifts.

At bottom the question depends upon the strength of your own impulse. If your love of music is the strongest thing in your life, you should follow it. But if you feel that politics would so absorb you as to make you forget all about music, the matter is otherwise. No one but yourself can answer this question; I can only suggest how one should act in the event of either answer.

The considerations you set forth in your letter are all such as should be taken into account; but on the balance my feeling is what I have expressed in this letter.

Sd. BERTRAND RUSSELL

King's College, Cambridge, 10.1.31

Dear Mr. Roy,

I shall find it very hard to say in a brief space, or indeed to say at all, what I feel about the mystical question you ask. This is not merely reserve; it is my sense of the gulf which lies between an Englishman and an Indian, in all these matters, even when on both sides there is good will. When I was a young man I became much absorbed first in Plato, and then Plotinus. I am one of the few Englishmen who have studied Plotinus from cover to cover, though that was years ago. I thought then that there must be some way of reaching ultimate

* With acknowledgements to *Anami*, pp. 295-97.

truth (or perhaps I should say ultimate experience) by some short cut. I suppose the principal thing that happened to me, in the course of my life, was the disappearance of this idea. I feel now that we are all very ignorant and quite incredibly and unimaginably inadequate to deal with the kind of questions we ask about ultimate things. I know, however, that there do exist what are called mystic states and I am interested when I come across anyone genuine who claims to have had them. But what they signify, really, when had, I cannot of course, pretend to judge. I am now pretty near to death and naturally my mind moves in that direction. What death really means no one can tell, perhaps it means different things to different people. I am content and indeed obliged to "wait and see". You say you have read the book on Goethe which I wrote. The attitude he had towards all these things is very much my own. I "wait" hoping and expecting to "see" if there is anything to see. Meantime "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Geichniss"¹ etc. may be a guess at truth. I expect that yoga comes in in this connection and I am quite ready to believe that in your country men have discovered much in the way of the control of the body by the mind and the engendering of conditions which most Europeans know nothing about. But how important that may be I cannot judge; I have never, since I was a young man, been interested in those things, and have always had the fear that there may be much danger and delusion there, even if there be also possible achievement.

To turn from these things to more "practical" ones, as Englishmen are apt to say (I am not defending our natural attitude), my own instinct or judgement or whatever it is, is all against attempting to deal with political questions as if they were religious or mystical, etc. When one enters into politics one enters the region of passion, interest, prejudice, and at last, fighting, which, however it begins, always ends in the destruction of all that was best and most generous in those who perhaps inaugurated it. I have heard of course from every side the kind of criticism you bring against the League of Nations: it *is* a most imperfect document. But its imperfection represents that of the nations and peoples who framed it, or, by their mere presence in the background, caused it to be framed as it is, and not otherwise. To say it is *bad* is to say what is true: that political mankind is bad. But political mankind will not be much better by scrapping all the poor stuff it tries to do, and crying for the moon—that is, for a different humanity. If one is working for that latter, it must be by other than political means, or, if one adopts political methods, one must cut them according to the cloth of the *now* existing mankind. I have written you all this that you may know where I stand, since it is these things you ask me about.

Yours sincerely,
G. Lowes Dickinson

¹ Every fleeting thing is but a symbol.

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of September 1987)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovers
the Divine Life



Volume Three: 1959

11

MY driving lessons started. The tutor opened the car-door and said with a slight smile: "Miss, now get the feel of the wheel while I explain the controls to you."

I understood. We drove over the chosen area—a lane of shops. There was fairly thick traffic—going both ways.

Three days a week I had lessons in different models of cars. When I had completed six lessons, I sensed that the Instructor was trying to flirt with me. So immediately I went to the main office of B.S.M., met the manager and requested to change the tutor. He did so.

The new tutor was polite, courteous and patient, which suited me.

One day I was driving and came to the traffic lights. As the light changed from orange to green, I jammed my foot down on the accelerator and the car shot away like a race-horse from its trap. The Instructor was alarmed and cautioned me: “Steady, slowly, Miss Hindocha, we are not in a hurry. Take it easy, will you?”

I was embarrassed and said: “Yes, Sir, I am sorry.”

Afterwards I was alert, so I got on quite well with the driving.

A few days later I did a perfect three-point turn and headed smoothly for Mercury House. When I came level with the gate I slowed the car to a standstill—carefully putting on the hand brake and switched off the ignition. My tutor was pleased and admired my driving.

*

The Mother sent a card dated 5.8.59, with a quotation from her own writings:

“It is only by remaining perfectly peaceful and calm, with an unshakable confidence and faith in the Divine Grace, that you will allow circumstances to be as good as they can be. *The very best happens always* to those who have put their entire trust in the Divine and in the Divine alone.”

She signed the card in red ink and added “P.T.O.” I smiled. She had written on the back of the card:

To my dear little child Huta,

I have received all your letters and the nice little tortoise which I have kept on my table near me.

Be quiet and confident and try to find me inside yourself, it will help you to sleep.

With my love and blessings.”

Yes, indeed, I could not sleep peacefully owing to constant work and tension. Many a night when I crept into my bed, my mind teemed with thoughts which tormented me and drove sleep from my eyes. Endless thoughts—none of

them fitted into pattern. Nevertheless, inside me there were peace and the Presence which definitely made me go on.

*

I kept on receiving letters from my people both from Africa and India.

Apart from side-studies I read a lot. The Mother sent me the *Bulletins*, Dyuman sent me *Mother India*. I read in the issue of May 1959 all about the *World Union*, which impressed me a lot. I also received the Gujarati magazine *Dakshina* from Laljibhai. There was with me a book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, by Rudolf Steiner, which I found very interesting. Here are two passages which appealed to me:

“...For every human being bears within himself, besides what we may call the work-a-day man, a higher man. And each individual can only himself awaken this higher being within him. As long as this higher being is not awakened, the higher faculties slumbering in every human being and leading to supersensible knowledge will remain concealed. The student must resolve to persevere in the strict and earnest observation of the rule here given, so long as he does not feel within himself the fruits of this inner tranquillity. To all who thus persevere, the day will come when spiritual light will envelop them. and a new world will be revealed to an organ of sight of whose existence within them they were hitherto unaware....

“...In Spiritual Science everything depends upon the energy, inward truthfulness, and uncompromising sincerity with which we confront our own selves, with all our deeds and actions, as a complete stranger....”

*

Days passed with surprising swiftness. The complexion of my skin became more and more fair. It took on a sheen of sunny ivory. My long hair became luxuriant—showing dark brown, the original colour of my tresses, and according to my height the weight of one hundred and eight pounds was just right.

I wrote a letter to the Mother about my activities and progress.

*

Sudha came back from her tour. She brought for me a dainty musical powder-box. When I opened it, there was a mirror in front, on the right the powder and puff, on the left a ballet dancer who danced and danced with the music. I was much amused.

One day Sudha invited me to lunch at her brother's apartment. She intro-

duced me to her brother and her elder sister and their friends.

While returning home, I lost my way. Eventually at the end of a long walk I reached the bus-stand and arrived home, exhausted.

After a week or so Sudha's people went back to South Africa and once again she and I started seeing each other. She told me one thousand and one things about her trip. With a sigh she said: "Everything was excellent except the food!"

*

Dr. Kamuben Patel, who was a devotee of the Mother, came from Dar-es-salaam (Tanzania) for further studies in the U.K. She visited me at Mercury House and had tea with me. She told me that she had gone to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and was very happy to see the Mother and that she intended to stay in the Ashram.

It was obvious—the Mother's love was so sweet and true that none could resist going frequently to the Ashram.

*

The Mother's letter, dated 12.8.59, came:

"To my dear little child Huta,

Received your letter of the 7th and I am sending this at once as you were asking for news, instead of the 15th as I expected to do.

With love and blessings."

She meant by "this" the message of 15th August, anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. It ran:

"All is created by the Supreme Goddess, the Supreme and Original Mahashakti, all proceeds from her, all lives by her, all lives in her even as she lives in all. All wisdom and knowledge are her wisdom and knowledge, all power is her power, all will and force her will and force, all action is her action, all movement her movement. All beings are portions of her power of existence."

SRI AUROBINDO

The message came just in time—on 15th August when I was to go to Doris's house for our special meeting and meditation.

The scent of sandalwood incense-sticks pervaded the room faintly. There were many people including my friends. I made them all read the message. They appreciated it immensely.

Doris introduced me to Aravinda Basu and his son Sudipta (Babi). He introduced me to Mrs. Margaret Fletcher who was also there. Suddenly I felt as if I had known her for ages.

After the prayers and meditation we lingered on for tea.

Aravinda invited me to go to Durham with him and his son. Doris advised me to go out of London for a change. I told them that I would let them know as Aravinda was to stay up to 1st September.

Mrs. Margaret Fletcher gave me her address—138 Harley Street, London W.1, and asked me to visit her whenever I felt like it. I thanked her and said that I would do so gladly.

It was a beautiful summer evening with the long day not yet passed. I stood by the french window and gazed enraptured at the lovely garden.

The air was perfumed with flowers.

Doris remarked that after seventeen years or so they had the warmest nicest summer.

Then we all parted with amicable goodbyes.

*

Days rolled on. The course in flower arrangement was over.

My driving lessons also had come to an end. I did not take the test. The tutor was disappointed and said: "Why, Miss Hindocha, since you have learnt so well you should appear for the exam and get the licence." I explained: "True, but I am always nervous in any kind of test. I am not keen on getting the licence. Moreover, it is not easy to drive cars in India. Unexpectedly from nowhere a cow or a cat or a cart or a cyclist dashes and darts across the road, diverts your concentration and puts you at sixes and sevens. Besides, we have pedestrians who seem to enjoy strolling down the middle of the road. I am afraid the roads are not like Autobahn in Germany or the Highway in America or a disciplined road in London. However, I wanted to learn driving and did so. Sir, thank you so much for the lessons."

He smiled and said: "It's my pleasure. Goodbye."

*

Summer was in full swing. Often I got fagged out. Still so much work to do! I felt sleepy but could not go to bed till a late hour.

I had lost six pounds in weight. I went to a nearby doctor in Swiss Cottage who asked me to go out of London for recuperation, because she thought that I worked too hard. Apart from the flower arrangement and driving, I had been practising typing and shorthand. In addition I received the news from Africa that my mother was seriously ill. Also, there was a severe drought in our Estate

Miwani (Kenya). All this told on my nerves and body. I wrote to the Mother and prayed ardently to make my mother perfectly all right and to remove the drought in Miwani.

Later I heard from my people that my mother was quite well and the rain had started falling. They were very happy, but never knew how much I had prayed to the Mother!

I brought my mind back to the doctor who had given me some tranquillisers and advised me to take proper rest. I thanked her.

I thought that in this life there was no "rest" in my destiny's dictionary! And it has been really very true so far.

*

I telephoned Doris and told her that I would go to Durham with Aravinda and his son. Soon she had informed him.

Everything was arranged.

(To be continued)

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WAS THERE AN ARYAN INVASION OF INDIA?

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1

TEXT-book after text-book of Indian history has carried an affirmative answer to this question and even a consensus on the date of the alleged event. The latest trumpeter of the answer as well as of the chronology involved is the study, *India: The Siege Within—Challenges to a Nation's Unity* by M. J. Akbar.

Brought out by Penguin Books, it has proved almost a best-seller. But it has a few *lacunae*, a small number of blind spots. Perhaps the most serious in its communal and cultural implications is the emphatic assertion it makes in several contexts that the present-day Hindus are descendants of clearly identifiable foreigners in a far-away yet not too remote epoch and that therefore, fundamentally, their culture cannot be claimed to be more indigenous, more Indian than any other that has come from outside our subcontinent and settled in it for centuries.

No doubt, Akbar brings up the subject mostly in connection with suspected communalism on the part of certain organizations and in relation to the queer antics they indulge in to plead that the Hindus, as far as history can reach, were always in this country. But is he justified in bringing up the subject at all? Are there any grounds for the parrot-cry of "Aryan invasion" ever since some European scholars coined the phrase in the early years of Indology?

Let us first see what Akbar has to say:

"The Aryans are believed by rational historians to have come to this subcontinent around 1500 B.C., when the migration of the Russian tribes, which was to take them to Greece, Asia Minor and Iran, brought them through the passes of the Hindu Kush mountains across Afghanistan to enter the land that is now known as Punjab" (p. 106).

Akbar's next reference on the same page tells us that the invaded land was not of barbarians but of the great Indus Valley Civilization which was then in its "dying throes". We are also told that in Punjab, where the Aryans originally settled, the 1028 hymns of the Rigveda were "composed and collected by their priests and that these hymns form the first records of life in the early Aryan period."

A little later (pp. 112, 113) Akbar notes the distinction often made between the Aryans and those who followed them in less early times through the same routes. The former are not called "outsiders" whereas the latter are. The distinction is made in spite of the fact that, unlike the British who went home in 1947 the empire-builders who preceded them—the Turks, Afghans or Mughals—never

went back to their native countries. Just like the Aryans in 1500 B.C., they "lost the concept of 'home'." Here Akbar pillories "fanatic Hindus" who, in his opinion, try absurdly to "prove" that while the Muslim conquerors came across the Hindu Kush mountains the Aryans did not do so: "one of them has seriously suggested that the Arctic polar region from which the Aryans set out on the first of their migrations was once in the heart of India before the world turned upside down!"

On p. 293 Akbar returns to the theme: "...the Hindus were themselves technically foreigners, the Aryans having migrated to the sub-continent around 1500 B.C. from the Russian steppes." In support of the Aryans' foreignness Akbar reminds us of Lokamanya Tilak, a hero of modern India, who "could not be accused of being an agent of the Muslims", but who declared in print that the Aryans had come from the Arctic.¹ Face to face with this indiscretion, what were the communalists to do? "Well, there was only one way to square the circle": to bring the Arctic to India if the Hindus could not be taken to the Arctic. Akbar cites the attempt of M. S. Golwalker, "one of the major intellectuals of the Hindu fundamentalist movement", in the book *We*: "The Arctic home in the Vedas was verily in Hindustan itself and it was not the Hindus who migrated to that land but the Arctic zone which emigrated and left the Hindus in Hindusthan."

After this dig at the extremes to which some writers tend to go, Akbar follows up with a quotation from Bipin Chandra's *Communalism in Modern India*² which tries to explain why the mind of Hindu fundamentalists worked as it did: "It was essential to the claim that India was solely the Hindus' 'hereditary territory' or possession, and to thus emphasize the 'foreignness' of Muslims and to deny that long residence in India could give them the right to become Indians."

At one place in Akbar's book (pp. 75-76) there is a reference to the invading Aryans quite apart from the problem of Hindu-Muslim confrontation. Now the northerners and the southerners are seen facing each other. The issue—luckily dead long ago—was of Tamil separatism. The Tamils were sought to be seen as a separate nation and much bad blood was caused by inflammatory literature, of which Akbar gives a sample: "The Aryans who came to India to eke out their existence concocted absurd stories in keeping with their barbarous status.... The blabberings of the intoxicated Brahmins in those old days are still faithfully observed in this modern world as the religious rituals, morals, stories, festivals, fasts, vows, and beliefs." Akbar comments that such literature arose out of the idea that "the Hinduism of caste and Brahmins was a result of the northern Aryan colonization of the country—the same Aryans who had driven the Dravida communities away from the Gangetic plains by conquest and subjugation, and then maintained their power by religious and cultural domination."

The separation of the Aryan North from the Dravidian South was inherent

in this idea and the southern Brahmins were to be destroyed for being the agents of the Aryan North. So bitter was the attitude in Tamil Nadu that the demoniac Ravana of the epic *Ramayana* came to be seen as a nationalist prince of South India defeated and killed by a representative of North Indian imperialism. According to Akbar, the agitation against Hindi is because the language is felt to be an instrument of that Aryan imperialism, against which the Tamils were warned by the writer of the invective Akbar has quoted.

Before we tackle the question of the Aryan invasion from the scholarly angle, we may note four points apropos of the above glimpses from Akbar. First, the title of Bipin Chandra's book is simply *Communalism* and not *Hindu Communalism*. For, surely there is a Muslim communalism no less than the Hindu variety and it is imbued with a religious fanaticism—which cannot be compared with whatever religious fervour may be drawn from the wide mentality of the Hindu scriptures, which is—to use a Shelleyan expression—“bright, gazing at many truths”. This fanaticism on the one hand permits no departure from old Islamic law by Muslims themselves, as Akbar has marked when criticizing obscurantist intolerance breaking out at times in Pakistan. On the other hand it fosters, among the Muslims, hatred of unbelievers in Allah and in Allah's final prophet, especially those who are also dubbed idolaters: in other words, Hindus.

The second point is that Akbar nowhere gives any sign of being anti-Hindu or sympathetic to separatist movements: he is all for secular democratic India as against theocratic Pakistan. Looking at the large mass of Muslims who were asked by Jinnah to remain in India, he considers the Partition of 1947 illogical and injurious. Hence the idea of Tamil Nadu separatism or of Sikhist partition, a Khalistan, gets also no support from him. What makes us a little uneasy on occasion is certain odd penchants: thus he seems to go out of his way to exonerate that ferocious avaricious adventurer and persecutor of idolaters, Muhammad of Ghazni, with the aid of a tribute paid to his soldierly ability and to his patronage of Islamic art and literature by a fair-minded Hindu historian like R.C. Majumdar. However, we should not let such passing whims prejudice us: mostly Akbar strives to set right partially distorted historical perspectives past or present.

But our third point concerns precisely one historical perspective of capital importance which he helps to distort rather than set right. He starts with saying that “rational historians” have “believed” the Aryans to have invaded India about 1500 B.C.: this indicates a hypothesis that has appeared acceptable to historians who reason to it from certain migratory motions of so-called Aryans elsewhere. Akbar's balanced language leaves room for some slight shade of uncertainty. But, in the later excerpts we have made, the believing is replaced by a knowing. What is regarded initially as a very plausible theory is treated soon after as something established and finally as an absolute fact on a par with the perfectly known entry of the Turks, Afghans or Mughals into India through the north-western routes

Our fourth point is that even if we carry Hindu civilization no further back than 1500 B.C. it can still be regarded as practically the original one in the country since it would be not only very ancient—nearly three thousand five hundred years old—but can be observed also as universalized during that long period in the whole of India, with Islam and other cults mere pockets here and there during comparatively recent times. Whether or not it has been under non-Hindu rule for a while in several parts of the land, India in a substantial sense, both chronologically and geographically, is the “hereditary territory” of the Hindus. Not that its being by all natural and normal standards their “possession” would entitle them to look on Muslims as foreigners. Islam has been long enough in India to render its adherents Indians, particularly as they are in the majority of cases neither Turks nor Afghans nor Mughals but Hindus converted. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was, as Akbar is aware, a member of a converted Hindu family of Kutch. Nobody sees in a common Muslim of India a foreigner, a non-Indian. Only when Islam makes him aggressively anti-Hindu, branding the totality of the many-dimensional religion of India as idolatry, does he become a foreigner in spirit and provoke a communalistic reaction. Even the few remnants, if any, of actual Islamic foreigners would not be discriminated against as non-Indians as long as the virus of anti-Hindu fanaticism was absent. Communalism, whether Muslim or Hindu, is never to be countenanced, but the claim that India is the hereditary territory of the Hindus is justified provided it is infused with the multi-visioned, tolerant and compassionate spirit of original Hinduism and kept free from all communalistic bias and animosity.

2

Now we are ready for a direct look at the situation which Akbar takes rational historians to be believing as true. Here a paradox meets us. Is there any straightforward evidence for their belief? Two kinds of evidence count in history: archaeological and literary. Sir Mortimer Wheeler who has been most urgent in the cause of an Aryan invasion has had to state: “It is best to admit that no proto-Aryan material culture has yet been identified in India”³ G.R. Dales, director of archaeological fieldwork in South Asia for many years, particularly in Pakistan, not only says that “the Aryans... have not yet been identified archaeologically;” he also reminds us that “no one has any exact knowledge of the date when the Aryans first entered the Indus Valley area.”⁴ Dales goes still further. Voicing the growing perception that in the epoch ascribed to the Aryan invasion the Indus Valley Civilization, called also the Harappa Culture, was undergoing a natural fade-out owing to internal and ecological reasons or, as Akbar himself puts it, was in its “dying throes” and needed no finishing stroke such as was once attributed to invading Aryans, Dales wonders whether any purpose is served by speaking of an Aryan invasion.

As for literary evidence we naturally turn to the Rigveda whose 1028 hymns were, as Akbar tells us, "composed and collected" by the "priests" of the invading Aryans and "form the first records of life in the early Aryan period". E.J. Rapson, speaking of the Aryans in the period of this scripture, admits: "Their oldest literature supplies no certain indication that they still retained the recollection of their former home: and we may reasonably conclude therefore that the invasion which brought them into India took place at a date considerably earlier."⁵ A.B. Keith, another invasion-wallah, says: "It is certain... that the Rigveda offers no assistance in determining the mode in which the Vedic Aryans entered India. If, as may be the case, the Aryan invaders of India entered by the western passes of the Hindu Kush and proceeded thence through the Punjab to the east, still that advance is not reflected in the Rigveda, the bulk at least of which seems to have been composed rather in the country round the Sarasvati river, south of the modern Ambala."⁶

Let us now quote two Indian proponents of the invasion-hypothesis and a pair from Pakistan. S.K. Chatterjee has to concede: "There is no indication from the Rigveda that the Aryans were conscious of entering a new country when they came to India."⁷ R.K. Ghosh remarks: "It really cannot be proved that the Vedic Aryans retained any memory of their extra-Indian associations, except perhaps a camouflaged reminiscence of their sojourn in Iran."⁸ A.H. Dani observes: "On the question of the Aryans, there is as yet no conclusive evidence as to either the time of their advent in India or the road by which they did it."⁹ F. Khan has the same thing to say in other words.¹⁰

As a summing-up of the general position, four more citations may be made. A.L. Basham is honest enough to confess: "Direct testimony to the assumed fact is lacking, and no traditions of an early home beyond the frontier survives in India"¹¹. T. Burrow has the same admission to make: "The Aryan invasion of India is recorded in no written document and it cannot yet be traced archaeologically."¹² We realise from these statements that it is not only the Rigveda that is completely reticent: all subsequent literature has the same utter silence. "According to traditional history as recorded in the Puranas," says A.D. Pusalker, "India itself is the home of the Aryans, and it is from here that they expanded in different directions to various countries of the world, spreading the Aryan culture."¹³ R.K. Mookerji reports the Puranic pointers a little more elaborately and links them to some Rigvedic sign-posts:

"Indian tradition knows nothing of any Aryan invasion of India from north-west and outside of India, nor of any advance of the Aryans from the west to east. On the other hand, it speaks of an Aila outflow, the expansion of the Druhyus through the north-west into the countries beyond. Accordingly, Rigveda X, 75, mentions rivers in their order from the east to the north-west, beginning with the Ganges, in accordance with the course of Aila expansion and its outflow beyond the north-west. Similarly, in the Rigvedic account of the Battle

of Ten Kings against Sudas who was an Aila King of north Panchala.... he is described as pushing his conquests westwards into the Punjab. This is also in keeping with the view that the bulk of the Rigveda was composed in the Upper Ganges-Jamna doab and plain. The Rigveda holds the Sarasvati especially sacred, and also knows the Sarayu, the river of Oudh."¹⁴

Of course, we need not subscribe to the sweepingness of the Puranic assertion that Aryanism went everywhere from India. Some "outflow" could and must have occurred, but India may not have been the sole habitat of the Aryans. They may have existed spread-out in a long belt of which India was one sector. Yet the fact that traditional history visualized India as the cradle-land of the Aryans is highly meaningful in connection with the Rigvedics. The conclusion provoked in the context of the Rigvedics by all the testimonies of archaeologists, historians and literary reporters appears to be unequivocal. To all intents and purposes the Rigvedics were autochthonous in India, part of a diverse population going back to a hoary antiquity beyond the reach of memory. To build up a picture of them as invaders around 1500 B.C. is gratuitous fancy at play in the teeth of all lack of evidence. It is an act of "special pleading" rather than of scrupulously conjuring up truth.

What, then, of Tilak's "Arctic home"? We must give it due attention. But we must touch first on a subtlety—the distinction between what Akbar calls the losing of the concept of "home" by Indian Muslims and the Rigvedic phenomenon of possessing no sense of having ever had an original habitat beyond the frontier. As we have seen, there are two kinds of Indian Muslims: a few descendants of the Turks, Afghans and Mughals who invaded India but settled down, and the masses who are Islamized Hindus. The latter have no concept of a non-Indian home to lose. They may be compared to the Rigvedics in this respect and the comparison would imply that the Rigvedics were as little invaders as the Islamized Hindus. The real comparison should be with the settled foreigners. But we must not ignore a dividing line. The foreigners know their ancestors came from abroad; only, they chose to regard the invaded country as their permanent dwelling-place. The Rigvedics betray not the slightest sign of an alien origin, it is as if their forefathers no less than themselves had always been in India. Furthermore, both the scions of the invading Muslim group and the converted Hindus are aware that Islam came from outside India: they turn to Mecca when they pray, the concept of a spiritual home elsewhere has never been lost and perhaps cannot be lost. Again, some of them who had agitated for the partition of India but were unlucky enough to be barred by Jinnah for economic reasons from Pakistan have lurking extra-territorial sympathies and feel their psychological home to be Pakistan. The Rigvedics are in a category quite apart. Comparing any kind of Indian Muslims with them is fallacious. They are autochthonous in a unique manner.

The sole modifying shade in their uniqueness is what is to be made out of

the subject we have raised with the phrase: "Tilak's Arctic home." Here we have to proceed with Sri Aurobindo as our guide. He has offered a symbolic interpretation of the Rigveda, reading in this ancient scripture a tale of spiritual adventure couched in terms of the physical life-conditions prevalent in its day although repeatedly it exceeds them and points subtly to inner experiences encountering bright helpful supernatural deities and dark occult enemies—designated Dasas, Dasyus—either at large or entrenched in their secret magical strongholds ("moving", "made of metal", "hundred-walled"). Sri Aurobindo's reading is not arbitrary or fantastic. It only works out in detail and in totality what has always been thought to be true in parts. Macdonell and Keith, with no bias towards symbolism, have yet declared: "Dasyu, a word of somewhat doubtful origin, is in many passages of the Rigveda clearly applied to superhuman enemies.... Dasa, like Dasyu, sometimes denotes enemies of a demoniac character in the Rigveda."¹⁵

Some of the experiences which Sri Aurobindo construes symbolically bring in descriptions of dawn and night which cannot apply to the Indian dawn and night. Sri Aurobindo notes these descriptions: "We are met by the clear statement that it was only after they had sat for nine or for ten months that the lost light and the lost sun were recovered by the Angirasa Rishis."¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo adds: "...what are we to make of the constant assertion of the discovery of the Light by the Fathers;—'Our fathers found out the hidden light, by the truth in their thoughts they brought to birth the Dawn', *gūlyam jyotiḥ pitaro anvavindan, satyamantrā ajanayan uśāsam* (VII.76.41)? If we found such a verse in any collection of poems in any literature, we would at once give it a psychological or a spiritual sense; there is no just reason for a different treatment of the Veda."¹⁷

With several passages Sri Aurobindo reinforces the spiritual or symbolic sense of the months, without denying the possibility of a simultaneous naturalistic reference. He comments: "It is in the revolution of the year that the recovery of the lost Sun and the lost cows, is effected, for we have the explicit statement in X.62.2, *rtenābhindan parivatsare valam*, 'by the truth, in the revolution of the year, they broke Vala', or as Sayana interprets it, 'by sacrifice lasting for a year'. This passage certainly goes far to support the Arctic theory, for it speaks of a yearly and not a daily return of the Sun. But we are not concerned with the external figure, nor does its validity in any way affect our own theory; for it may very well be that the striking Arctic experience of the long night, the annual sunrise and the continuous dawns was made by the Mystics the figure of the spiritual night and its difficult illumination. But that this idea of Time, of the months and years is used as a symbol seems to be clear from other passages of the Veda, notably from Gritsamada's hymn to Brihaspati, II.24."¹⁸

Stressing that the Vedic Dawn and Night cannot be explained naturalistically in India, Sri Aurobindo writes: "It is only in the Arctic regions that the

attitude of the Rishis towards these natural circumstances and the statement about the Angirasas become at all intelligible. But though it is extremely probable that the memories of the Arctic home enter into the external sense of the Veda, the Arctic theory does not exclude an inner sense behind the ancient images drawn from Nature...."¹⁹

Obviously, according to Sri Aurobindo, a naturalistic exegesis *à la* Tilak may be accepted as colouring the spiritual-symbolic to a fair extent, but Sri Aurobindo speaks of "memories of the Arctic home": he does not locate the Rigvedic hymns in the polar regions. This appears to make good sense; for, when the Vedic Dawn with its backdrop of Arctic tones is invoked to establish for the sacrificers a state of bliss, the state is said to be full not only of cows (symbolizing light, the Sanskrit word *go* connoting both "cow" and "ray") but also of horses (symbolizing vital force)—that is, animals not at all likely to have been a part of a polar scenario.

Nor does Sri Aurobindo place that possible Arctic experience as so preceding the composition of the hymns as to get connected with a recent entry of the Rigvedics into a non-Aryan India. He has no room for the invasion theory. In his view, there is in the Rigveda "no actual mention" of any invasion. "The distinction between Aryan and non-Aryan, on which so much has been built, seems on the mass of the evidence to indicate a cultural rather than a racial difference. The language of the hymns clearly points to a particular worship or spiritual culture as the distinguishing sign of the Aryan—a worship of Light and of the powers of Light and a self-discipline based on the culture of the 'Truth' and the aspiration to immortality,—Ritam and Amritam. There is no reliable indication of any racial difference."²⁰ Here, as with the Dasa-Dasyus, Sri Aurobindo is not alone in his cultic and non-racial reading. Macdonell and Keith remark: "The great difference between the Dasyus and the Aryans was their religion.... It is significant that constant reference is made to difference in religion between Aryan and Dasya and Dasu."²¹ The question of Aryan and Dravidian races pitted against each other can hardly arise. Not that Sri Aurobindo is entirely averse to the idea of an influx of peoples into India. He continues: "It is always possible that the bulk of the peoples now inhabiting India may have been the descendants of a new race from more northern latitudes, even perhaps, as argued by Mr. Tilak, from the Arctic regions; but there is nothing in the Veda, as there is nothing in the present ethnological features of the country, to prove that this descent took place near to the time of the Vedic hymns or was the slow penetration of a small body of fair-skinned barbarians into a civilised Dravidian peninsula."²²

Thus Tilak is not to be brushed aside altogether, but his "Arctic home" recedes into an incalculable past allowing the Rigvedics to be rated historically the original inhabitants of northern India. The expression "memories of the Arctic home" is to be understood in its proper nuance. Not even a faintly re-

cognisable allusion in terms of any reminiscent mood or attitude can be detected in the references to a strange non-Indian-looking day or night. All that we have is an inner spiritual experience, independent in itself of common Nature-events like several other accounts which pass beyond them and prompt symbolic interpretations. It is not treated at all like a memory nor is it intended to recall in the hearer of the mantra the sense of another land on earth. Assuming a possible naturalistic analogue, Sri Aurobindo labels the description as a memory and grants plausibility to Tilak's idea. Memory in the usual connotation does not hold here.

What it would be in that connotation by contrast can be seen from S. Sri-kanta Sastri's observation: "Migrating races look back to the land of their origin for centuries. The Parsis of India remember their origin after eight hundred years. The ancient Egyptians and the Phoenicians remembered their respective lands of origin even though they had forgotten their location."²³ About the Parsis I may add that their memory extends backwards actually for over twelve hundred years, for, as P.P. Balsara says, "From the facts available till today we can conclude...that their first permanent settlement in India was at Sanjan on the west coast in 716..."²⁴ We may also draw attention to the *Airiyānam vaējo*, the homeland recollected by the ancestors of the Parsis, the ancient Iranians, quite unlike their fellow Aryans across the border. We cannot help agreeing with Sastri's inference: "The Vedic Aryans, if at all they came from outside..., must have lived in the Sapta-Sindhu [the region of the seven rivers in ancient Punjab] so many centuries before the Vedic period that they had lost all memory of an original home."

Yes, Tilak, put in the right perspective, cannot avail to cast the Rigvedics in the role of aliens or invaders on Indian soil. But if there was no invasion around 1500 B.C. or in any computable earlier age, the Indus Valley Civilization could not be anterior to the Rigveda. Either it must itself be the creation of the Rigvedics who too covered the Indus Valley or it must be posterior to their work. There are a number of cultural and socio-economic differences preventing it from being a reflection of the Rigveda, but signs are present which would characterize it as at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from that scripture. Given time enough it would easily be a natural successor. Besides, archaeology has laid bare, especially in the Saraswati valley sacred to the Rigveda, a pre-Harappan civilization on a large scale which may prove to be Rigvedic.

4

With the invasion-hypothesis out of the way a light is immediately shed on the Aryan-Dravidian distinction which has been its regrettable consequence. The people of the North need no longer figure as alien to those of the South and the hostility fostered between the two groups by extremist politicians loses its

edge. A healthy harmonious trend can be set, taking us towards the position Sri Aurobindo reached when he came to South India. Not only did his study of the Rigveda dispel the notion of an Aryan invasion. He also gave up the popular wedge driven between the physical types of Aryan and Dravidian and between the Sanskrit and the apparently non-Sanskritic tongues. In the midst of whatever regional disparities might have been evolved he saw behind all varieties a unity of physical as well as of cultural type throughout India. His linguistic researches were an eye-opener too. He has observed: "My preconceived ideas were disturbed and confounded. For, on examining the vocables of the Tamil language, in appearance so foreign to the Sanskritic form and character, I yet found myself continually guided by words or by families of words supposed to be pure Tamil in establishing new relations between Sanskrit and its distant sister, Latin, and occasionally between the Greek and the Sanskrit. Sometimes the Tamil vocables not only suggested the connection but proved the missing link in a family of connected words. And it was through the Dravidian language that I came first to perceive what seems to me the true law, origins and, as it were, the embryology of the Aryan tongues. I was unable to pursue my examination far enough to establish any definite conclusion, but it certainly seems to me that the original connection between the Dravidian and the Aryan tongues was far closer and more extensive than is usually supposed and the possibility suggests itself that they may even have been two divergent families derived from one lost primitive tongue."²⁵

Sri Aurobindo projected a work dealing with a re-examination of a large part of the field of what was termed in his day Comparative Philology and with a reconstruction on a new basis which he hoped would bring us nearer to a true science of language. He called it *The Origins of Aryan Speech*. The draft of only one long chapter was found among his manuscripts, along with a substantial number of separate linguistic notes. Unfortunately, not much research has been done by others along his lines except for a remarkable series of papers of a South-Indian scholar written when Sri Aurobindo was himself revising the current dichotomy of Aryan-Dravidian. These papers were collected in 1975 by the Madras Law Journal Office under the title *Dravidian Theories*. The author, R. Swaminatha Aiyar, is tempted by his important discoveries to argue that Dravidian "is made up of elements in old Indo-Aryan and is merely a phase of Indo-Aryan" (p.164). This strikes one as too radical a view though Aiyar succeeds in showing that many words turn out to be Aryan behind their Dravidian exteriors which themselves can be seen as crypto-Aryan. Sri Aurobindo's vision is more comprehensive and constructive but Aiyar can serve to extend several aspects of it. In any case, what Sri Aurobindo sets out to demonstrate as a sequel to his rejection of the ill-founded Aryan-invasion assumption is an extremely promising step in the direction of undoing the discord that occasionally erupts between the two halves of India and that attains its peak of propaganda in such

a writing as Akbar has sampled.

From many standpoints the abandonment of this assumption is vital to a proper assessment of the status and range of Hindu civilization and a true concept of the large majority of the country's population as a homogeneous race with a number of local or provincial variations which do not prevent it from deserving a unifying single name: Dravidaryan.

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WORDSWORTH THE *KAVI* AND HIS RELEVANCE TODAY

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“THE Irrelevance of Wordsworth Today” was one of the papers read out at the inter-collegiate seminar held on the occasion of Wordsworth’s birth bi-centenary. The speaker, Miss Tilottama Mukherjee of Loreto College, argued that conditions had changed so completely since Wordsworth’s times that nothing he had said could be meaningful in the context of the present human situation. It has been frequently argued that in his view of religion and society Wordsworth is severely hedged in by many walls of convention which make him more a poet of his age than of the future. However, it is what the poet sees and feels, not what he intellectually formulates, which is the real essence of his poetry. And what Wordsworth, the seer-poet, saw and felt is, we shall see, of great significance to an age in which, fed up with technological culture, man is groping for something which will give meaning to life, make it worth living, give it a sense of direction and purpose. The occasion of the bi-centenary of his birth provides us with an excellent opportunity for recognising, at long last, that Wordsworth is the first seer-poet in English literature, the first English *kavi*. To the ancients it was obvious that poetry is, in reality, not so much a “making”, a composition, as a revelation of something which eternally exists.¹ Knowing this, they used the same word to describe the poet and prophet, the creator and seer: *vates*, *sophos*, *kavi*. Wordsworth himself is fully conscious of the revelatory and inspirational nature of poetry:²

If thou partake the animating faith
That poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven’s gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before...
A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
Creative and enduring...

It is not surprising that this aspect of Wordsworth should so long have been neglected. The present Occidental *Weltanschauung* regards the external life of the mind and the senses as alone of importance, as the sole reality. Hence it sees the mystic as one who gets lost in a self-made chimerical world of visions

and hallucinations. It is argued that the mystic's experiences are purely subjective and not scientifically verifiable, hence they are unreal and irrational. To the Western mind, the truths the mystic speaks of are either unintelligible or are regarded as nebulous abstractions and poetic fancies. Thus it has been the fate of the mystic in the West to be, at best, taken notice of superficially, condescendingly, by "self-applauding intellects"³ who

Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions...
Through want of better knowledge in the heads
That framed them.⁴

What is frequently forgotten is that the mystic's goal is to acquire knowledge of his soul and of the supreme Truth of creation: a knowledge which cannot be arrived at by an approach based on the senses and on surface-reality. Such an insight is only possible through an inward gaze, through an intuitive contact with the Truth itself, or through direct knowledge by identification of the mystic's *ātman* with the *Brahman*. In other words, for appreciating a mystic like Wordsworth, what is required is not the Occidental but the Oriental view of life.

It is only natural, therefore, that the first recognition of the *kavi* Wordsworth should have come from the East, from another seer-poet, Sri Aurobindo, in his regrettably short study of the great Romantic in his *The Future Poetry*.⁵ More recently, in 1970 itself, there have been, in India, two remarkable appreciations of the significance of Wordsworth. One is a poem, "To William Wordsworth", by one of the finest of our young poets, Sukanta Chaudhuri.⁶ The other is a brilliant study of Wordsworth in the January and February issues of *Mother India* 1970, by Mr. K. D. Sethna. Mr. Sethna, incidentally, provides us with an excellent definition of the *kavi*:⁷ "One who has known by direct intuition and by intimate personal realisation and by concrete entry of consciousness a Divine Reality at once emanating, containing and pervading the universe, an Existence that is an infinite Consciousness and eternal Bliss and the secret Self of all things and beings." Unfortunately, neither Sri Aurobindo nor Mr. Sethna has discussed this aspect of Wordsworth at length. In the present study, I propose to approach Wordsworth from the viewpoint of Hindu mysticism because, approached from this angle, his poetry becomes crucially relevant and meaningful for the modern man in search of a richer order than what mere technology can provide, for a more organic sense of meaning in life.

At the outset it would be well to keep in mind that mysticism is not something which can be appreciated or experienced purely through the intellect, for the simple reason that knowledge based on the rational faculty cannot stretch beyond the mental domain. To extend it to infinity would be to snap it, as Yajnavalkya bluntly tells Maitreyee in reply to her incessant renewal of queries:

“If you do not stop, your head will fall off.”⁸ Mystic truth must be approached through the heart, which is to guide and inspire the mind. This heart is not, of course, the external seat of emotions, but the *antarhrdaya* of the Upanishads, the secret inner spark of divine consciousness which is the source, the fount of our true personality. This is what lies behind Wordsworth’s statement that “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” And when he says that it “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity”, he is referring to the withdrawal of the consciousness into a secret, subtle inner world, and its re-appearance with the treasures gathered there.⁹ Genuine poetry, as Wordsworth well knew, cannot be produced by intellectual labour.

It should also be kept in mind that mystic experiences are not imaginary metaphysical abstractions. What to the ordinary understanding is a metaphysical abstraction, or a nebulous poetic fancy, is to the mystic an intimate and concrete reality: “To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract, has a concreteness, substantiality, which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event...The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others, or in the world, just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity.”¹⁰ The last two alternatives, unfortunately, have been the bane of both Wordsworth’s and Sri Aurobindo’s poetry among the majority of readers, despite their assurance that they are

Speaking no dream, but things oracular;
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise
Do read the invisible soul.¹¹

To approach Wordsworth from the standpoint of Indian mysticism is to be surprised by joy, for here in an alien culture we discover a kindred spirit, and the East and the West merge in the oneness of mystical experiences. Unlike the Occidental artist, the Oriental concentrates only on those facets, those objects of external nature which “while charming him, give rise to an inner vision or experience in him”.¹² It is, as Wordsworth writes in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, “The feeling therein developed (which) gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feelings”, the latter being the case with English poetry up to his times. What is even more remarkable is how Sri Aurobindo’s description of the artist with the spiritual vision perfectly fits Wordsworth:¹³ “Behind a few figures, a few trees, and rocks, the supreme Intelligence, the supreme Imagination, the supreme Energy lurks, acts, feels, is, and, if the artist has the spiritual vision, he can see it and suggest perfectly the great mysterious Life... full of a mastering intention in that which appears blind

and unconscious.” And this is Wordsworth at the beginning of Book IX of *The Excursion*:

To every Form of Being is assigned...
 An active Principle:—howe’er removed
 From sense and observation, it subsists
 In all things, in all natures; in the stars
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
 The moving waters, and the invisible air...
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
 No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.

Earlier, in *The Prelude*, Book III, ll. 127-132, he speaks of the same vision in personal terms:

To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
 I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
 Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
 Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning,—

and again in Book II (ll. 401-409):

I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O’er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
 O’er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart:
 O’er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air; o’er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
 And mighty depth of waters.

It is precisely this spiritual revelation which Arjuna obtains from Lord Krishna: “I am taste in the waters, O son of Kunti, I am the light of sun and moon, I am pranava in all the Vedas, sound in ether and manhood in men. I am pure scent in earth and energy of light in fire; I am life in all existences, I am the ascetic force of those who do askesis. Know Me to be the eternal seed of all existences,

O son of Pritha. I am the intelligence of the intelligent, the energy of the energetic. I am the strength of the strong devoid of desire and liking. I am in beings the desire which is not contrary to dharma, O Lord of the Bharatas."¹⁴ "I, O Gudakesha, am the self which abides within all beings. I am the beginning and middle and end of all beings... And whatsoever is the seed of all existences, that am I, O Arjuna; nothing moving or unmoving, animate or inanimate in the world can be without Me."^{14a}

It has always intrigued readers why natural objects thrilled Wordsworth so deeply and moved him so powerfully. "Pantheism" is not a very satisfactory way of explaining what is hinted at in these lines from his "Written in Early Spring":

And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes...

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

What lies behind this has been brought out clearly by a greater *kavi* while describing the tender sapling shooting upwards from its underground prison:"¹⁵

A blissful yearning riots in its leaves,
A magic passion trembles in its blooms,
Its boughs aspire in hushed felicity.
An occult godhead of this beauty is cause,
The spirit and intimate guest of all this charm,
This sweetness's priestess and this reverie's muse.
Invisibly protected from our sense
The Dryad lives drenched in a deeper ray
And feels another air of storms and calms
And quivers inwardly with mystic rain.

(italics mine)

When Wordsworth speaks of seeing that Nature not only beautifies the inner being of her charges, but that she

wants not the power
To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life,—¹⁶

he is echoing the Indian mystic vision of the Divine love and joy which pulsates through all creation, the common and the shabby no less than the lofty and the beautiful, uplifting all:

I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour...
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes.¹⁷

Is it not akin to what Krishna tells Arjuna:¹⁸ "Deluded minds despise me lodged in the human body because they know not my supreme nature of being, Lord of all existences"?

Further, when Wordsworth confidently states that because of such mystic insights into the Truth behind the surface-reality, brought about through contact with Nature,

The Genius of the Poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads—¹⁹

he is not sentimentally deluding himself. Here is another mystic poet who asserts a kindred faith in Nature, and his enumeration of the different experiences brought about through natural communion are remarkably parallel to Wordsworth's:²⁰ "It is always through the creations of Nature, through her bountiful gifts and graces that art steals into our heart. At first it is an enjoyment of the creations of Nature ('drinking in a pure/Organic pleasure from 'the silver wreaths/Of curling mist'²¹) and then an experience of the aesthetic delight ('never dreamt of aught/More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed/Than those few nooks...'²²), and, last a concentration on the experience giving birth to the creative impulse ('An auxiliar light/Came from my mind, which on the setting sun/Bestowed new splendour'²³)."

(To be continued)

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SRI RADHIKA'S FACE

WE tremble at the incessant
 Flight of Time,
 The constant stream emptying
 Our coveted cup of life.
 Ephemeral beings we who live
 On the borrowed riches
 Of a few fleeting days—
 From our hands escape the hours,
 Uncertain to us are our own ways.
 Seconds are to us precious jewels
 Because unknown is the drift of life's tale.
 Unknown the duration of the play.
 Mistaken steps and missed chances
 Ever dog our feet of clay.
 Blown lamps and dry flowers—
 Will they be the end of earth's mighty travail?
 No, let us look to the east,
 For beyond the brink of night,
 Ever beckoning,
 Glows that marvel,
 Sri Radhika's face.

SHYAM KUMARI

HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

PART 2: THE VIZIERS OF BASSORA

(Continued from the issue of September 1987)

ANICE makes Ibrahim drink and under its influence he reveals his amorous intentions. When he is fairly drunk, Nureddene teases him by taking away the wine. The jolly tale is best told in the words of Sri Aurobindo—

Anice-Aljalice:

Drink, my lord

Nureddene (*drinking*):

By the lord, but I am sleepy. I will even rest my head
in thy sweet lap for a moment. (*He lies down*)

Ibrahim:

Allah! Allah! What, he sleeps?

Anice-Aljalice:

Fast, that is the trick he always serves me. After the first cup he
dozes off and leaves me quite sad and lonely.

Ibrahim:

Why, why, why, little one! Thou art not alone, and why shouldst
thou be sad? I am here—old Shaikh Ibrahim, I am here.”¹

Here one can almost see him making romantic plans. Anice answers.

“I will not be sad, if you will drink with me.

Ibrahim:

Fie, fie, fie!

Anice-Aljalice:

By my head and eyes!

Ibrahim:

Well, well, well! Alas, 'tis a sin, 'tis a sin,
'tis a sin (*drinks*)

Verily, verily.

Anice-Aljalice:

Another.

Ibrahim:

No, no, no.

Anice-Aljalice:

By my head and eyes!

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 7, p 681

Ibrahim:

Well, well, well, well! 'Tis a gracious sin,
Allah forgive me! (*drinks*)

Anice-Aljalice:

Just one more.¹

Anice makes him lightly inebriated while Nureddene pretends to sleep, then she drives him into a trap laid for him with charming cunning while he takes it for a heaven-sent opportunity and comes out in his true colours—

“Ibrahim:

Does he sleep? Now if it were the wine of thy
lips, little one.”²

This proposal or rather declaration of desire gives Anice-Aljalice her merry chance and she spares nothing to Ibrahim neither his puns nor his pious protestations as she heaps merry reproaches on him—

“Old father, old father! Is this thy sanctity and the chastity of thee and thy averseness to frivolity? To flirt with light-minded young hussies like me! Where is thy sanctification? Where is thy justification? Where is thy predestination? O mystic, thou art biforked with an evil bifurcation. Woe's me for the great Alhashhash!”³

Her devious cunning and delightful parody of Ibrahim's earlier speech using his own words leaves Ibrahim flustered and floundering—

“Ibrahim:

No, no, no.

Anice-Aljalice:

Art thou such a hypocrite? Shaikh Ibrahim! Shaikh Ibrahim!

Ibrahim:

No, no, no! A fatherly jest! a little little jest! (*drinks*)”⁴

Nureddene pretends to wake up from his pretended sleep and proceeds to tease him further, by withholding wine from him—

“Nureddene (*starting up*):

Shaikh Ibrahim, thou drinkest?

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 681-682.

² *Ibid.*, p. 682.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Ibrahim:

Oh, ah! 'Twas thy slave-girl forced me. Verily, verily!

Nureddene:

Anice! Anice! Why wilt thou pester him? Wilt thou pluck down his old soul from heaven? Fie! draw the wine this side of the table..."¹

Nureddene and Anice start drinking pledging each other and tempting and teasing Ibrahim beyond endurance—

"Nurreddene:

...I pledge you my heart."

Anice-Aljalice:

To you, my dear one.

Nureddene

You have drunk half your cup only; so again to Shaikh Ibrahim and his learned sobriety!

Anice-Aljalice:

To the shade of great Alhashhash!"²

Ibrahim can stand it no more. He joins them openly,

"Fie on you! What cursed unneighbourly manners are these to drink in my face and never pass the bowl?"³

The lovers destroy all the false pretences of Shaikh Ibrahim. They leave nothing with which the pretentious boozier may cover his weakness. He is forced to come out in his naked besottedness, reeking of desire:

"Anice-Aljalice and Nureddene (*together*),

Shaikh Ibrahim! Shaikh Ibrahim! Shaikh Ibrahim!

Ibrahim:

Never cry out to me. You are a Hour and she is a Houri come down from Heaven to ensnare my soul. Let it be ensnared! 'Tis not worth one beam from under your eyelids. Hour, I will embrace thee, I will kiss thee, Houri.

"Nureddene:

Embrace not, Shaikh Ibrahim, neither kiss, for thy mouth smelleth evilly of that accursed thing, wine. I am woeful for the mystic Alhashhash.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 683

² *Ibid.*, p. 683

³ *Ibid.*

Anice-Aljalice:

Art thou transmogrified, O Sufi, O adept, O disciple of Ibn Batuta ?”¹

Ibrahim is too great a humbug, too adept a chameleon to be ashamed. He is on the high crest of wine-induced elation and makes a surrender of his pretences at the altar of their twin beauty—

“Ibrahim:

Laugh, laugh! laughter is on your beauty like sunlight on the fair minarets of Mazinderan the beautiful. Give me a cup. (*drinks*) You are sinners and I will sin with you. I will sin hard, my beauties. (*drinks*)”²

Having demolished the lofty pinnacles of his pretended ideal they do not let him off yet. There is further banter and Ibrahim now openly justifies and even glorifies his drunkenness. He is a fool who will try to elevate sin itself.

“Ibrahim (*drinks*):

Sin not thou by troubling the coolness of wine in my throat. Light them, light them but not more than two.”³

Anice pursues her captive and pours playful reproaches on him:

“Shaikh Ibrahim, drunkenness sees but double, and dost see eighty-four? Thou art far gone in thy cups, O adept, O Ibn Batutist.”⁴

They openly ridicule Shaikh Ibrahim. This proximity of beauty and nobility releases in Ibrahim the hidden belief in his own greatness, a privilege of fools. The bigger the fool the more Himalayan his self-esteem. The mediocre and lowly believe that but for a twist of unjust fate they could have been sagacious rulers or illustrious generals. When Nureddene says of the Caliph:

“Truly, he is a great Caliph,”⁵

Bathed in a wine induced sense of grandeur Ibrahim answers:

Great enough, great enough. There might have been greater if Fate had willed it. But’tis the decree of Alla’h. Some He raiseth to be Caliphs and some He turned into gardeners.”⁶

Shaikh Ibrahim inspires others to gaiety and jest and jocularly flow in improvised verse from the two charming satirists in two ‘odes’ to this “Old Sobriety.”

¹ *Ibid.* ² *Ibid.*, p. 684.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 684.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 684-685.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 685.

⁶ *Ibid.*

“Nurreddene:

Saw you Shaikh Ibrahim the grave old man?
Allah! Allah! I saw him drunk and drinking.
What was he doing when the dance began?
He was winking; verily, verily, he was winking.”¹

The rosy maid of spring and beauty—Anice Aljalice—is not to be outdone. It is the night of celebrating the fall of an old hypocrite.

“Anice-Aljalice:

White as winter is my beard,
All my face with wrinkles weird,
Yet I drink.
Hell-fire? judgement? who’s afraid?
Ibrahim would kiss a maid
As soon as think.”²

In a most truly fairy-tale fashion, fate brings the Caliph himself to the scene. This master of men and nations played his part in life with such a rare jest that history and legend pay him equal homage. He who used to wander *incognito* amongst the poorest hovels of his capital, to know and alleviate the suffering of his subjects, here he comes like a blade of finest steel tempered with laughter and sharpened on the stone of generosity. There is a humour even in his anger, and Jaafar is like a lesser echo of his master’s magnanimity who reflects his moods with ready wit.

“Haroun Al Rasheed:

Now if she play and sing divinely, Jaafar,
You shall be hanged alone for your offence,
If badly, all you four shall swing together

Jaafar:

I hope she will play vilely.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Wherefore, Jaafar?

Jaafar:

I ever loved good company, my lord,
And would not tread my final road alone.”³

Here is quick wit, superb repartee and a subtle revenge that evaporates Haroun’s annoyance. He is ready to be the knight-errant—the benevolent angel. While Shaikh Ibrahim sings in drunken revelry

¹ *Ibid.* ² *Ibid.*, p. 686 ³ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

“Chink-a chink-a-chink!
 We will kiss and drink,
 And be merry, O very very merry,
 For your eyes are bright
 Even by candle light
 And your lips as red as the red round cherry”—

thus proclaiming himself an impenitent and unabashed follower of Bacchus. Meantime the world-renowned Caliph for whom the whole of life is a jest descends from the tower platform to face the poaching fisherman Karim, a rogue who takes our breath away by his audacity and who because of his bold buffoonery wins a fat purse, instead of the gallows which he deserves. Here Sri Aurobindo has created the archetype of a fearless and shameless character who is a dare-devil, the very soul of spunk and brazenness who even though caught by the Caliph himself is yet cheeky and insolent. He adds a robust strand of unique humour to the several others in the play. Now he enters with a basket full of stolen fish chuckling to himself:

“Here’s a fine fat haul! O my jumpers! my little beauties! O your fine white bellies! What a joke, to catch the Caliph’s own fish and sell them to him at thrice their value!”¹

Face to face with the Caliph Karim’s insolence beggars description, his spunk beyond belief. Here unfolds a scene that makes us laugh aloud.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Who art thou?

Kareem:

O Lord, ’tis the Caliph himself! I am a dead fisherman. (*falling flat*) O Commander of the Faithful! Alas, I am an honest fisherman.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Dost thou lament thy honesty?

What fish hast thou?

Kareem:

Only a few whitebait and one or two minnows. Poor thin rogues all of them! They are not fit for the Caliph’s honourable stomach.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Show me thy basket, man.

Are these thy whitebait and thy two thin minnows?

Kareem:

Alas, sir, ’tis because I am honest.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Give me thy fish.

¹ *Ibid.*

Kareem:

Here they are, here they are, my Lord!

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Out! the whole basket, fellow.

Do I eat live fish, you thrust them in my face?

And now exchange thy outer dress with me.

Kareem:

My dress? Well, you may have it: I am liberal as well as honest.

But 'tis a good gaberdine; I pray you, be careful of it.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

Woe to thee, fellow! What is this filthiness

Thou call'st a garment?

Kareem:

O sir, when you have worn it ten days, the filth will come easy to you and, as one may say, natural. And 'tis honest filth; it will keep you warm in winter.

Haroun Al Rasheed:

What, shall I wear thy gaberdine so long?

Kareem:

Commander of the Faithful! Since you are about to leave kingdom and follow an honest living for the good of your soul, you may wear worse than an honest fisherman's gaberdine.

'Tis a good craft and an honorable."¹

The scoundrel is laughing up his sleeve at the Caliph. To cast aspersions on the work of a ruler even if by inference shows a rare irreverence and a devil may care attitude. And the Caliph good-humouredly accepts his badinage; always sportingly he rewards him with "a purse crammed full of golden pieces." Karim is a thief, an upstart but delightfully so.

Contrary to moralists' maxim that crime doesn't pay we find here that crime pays munificently. On that day Haroun Al Rasheed whose name inspired terror in the hearts of all wrong-doers was in a mellower mood, for spring was abroad in his garden and bewitching beauty had wandered unbidden in his Pavillion of Pleasure. The steely heart was ready to overlook Karim's minor offence and impertinent speech. If Sheikh Ibrahim is an arch hypocrite, then Karim is the most unrepentant and shameless representative of poachers.

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 691-692.

JUNG AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

SYNTHETIC TRENDS IN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

(Continued from the issue of October 1987)

Progress of Jungian Thought in America

JUNG has contributed a system of therapy, which is being practised regularly in about twenty countries in the world and in the U.S.A. it is flourishing most. *Jungian Analysis* (Shambhala, 1984) is a fine publication, which gives an account of the state of Jungian practice in the U.S.A. It says:

“A significant aspect of Jungian treatment, however, is not described so well by the term analysis. This is the experience of the self that often occurs in, or as a result of, Jungian therapy. Jungian analysis results not only in Self-knowledge but also in a new kind of Self-experience. People who enter Jungian analysis may do so because they wish to know more about themselves, but if the analysis actually works, they come to experience themselves in a way that was previously not possible. This new kind of self-experience takes place as the rigidities of ego-consciousness dissolve, and as the unconscious responds and is acknowledged within the security and understanding of the analytical framework. What actually creates the therapeutic effect in Jungian analysis is the increasing amplitude of a person’s experience of the Self. This experience, moreover, usually brings with it an influx of energy and vitality, so that the common result of analysis is more creativity in one’s responses to life and its challenges.” (*Jungian Analysis*, pp. 30-31)

“Coming to terms with the unconscious,” then, means gaining insight in both of these areas: mastering the personal complexes to some extent on the one hand, while grasping the symbolic meaning of emerging archetype contents on the other. Analysis creates an ongoing dialogue between the ego and the unconscious, which produces a dialectical tension of opposites within ego-consciousness, between ego strivings on the one hand and unconscious disturbances and archetypally based demands on the other. This dialogue is mirrored in the dialectical structure of analysis itself. This dialectical structure, in turn, reflects the Self, which actually consists of a dialectical play of opposites. For ego-consciousness to come to mirror the Self more completely is another way of expressing the goal of analysis.” (*Ibid.*, 38)

*

“The individuation process is a life long journey and the analyst is at first a pilgrim, then a guide; but analysts never stop being pilgrims either. For it is

well known that people cannot lead others further than they have travelled themselves." (*Ibid.*, p. 377)

*

"Foremost in Jung's psychology is the acknowledgment of the archetype of the Self as the principle of wholeness, the universal principle. The Self functions as an ordering principle, but since it is all-inclusive, it also embodies the opposite of order—that is, chaos. The Self, as overarching archetypal power, is eternally engaged in making order out of chaos, only to watch the order dissolve again into chaos, and to re-order it, again and again. Religions, whatever else they may be, are expressions of the human need to relate to the ultimate source of being, the guiding power of the universe." (*Ibid.*, pp. 379-80)

These are fine trends of growth in Jung's thought. However, the unconscious continues to be a mixed sort of thing, of chaos and order. The Super-consciousness is a wide domain by itself, which needs to be distinguished and identified and clearly investigated.

The Rise of Interest in Meditation in the West

(1)

In the West scientists always look for new fields for research and it is interesting, how eagerly 'meditation' is being taken up for research for its own essential nature as much as for promoting peace, balance, equipoise and concentration in the present-day life of struggle and tension and mental difficulties. But 'meditation' is really a vast field. Its essence is 'collectedness' as opposed to 'dispersed state.' But this may be promoted by personal will to concentrate, seek peace, turn to inner spiritual resources of life or to higher realms of consciousness or seek help from them through prayer, adoration, etc. A meditation with its locus in the mental-vital-physical nature is one thing and a meditation with a contact with the inner and higher resources is another thing and their effects on the normal externalist personality are a great deal different. Then the helpful conditions for inducing meditation, music, inspiring study, flowers and other objects of beauty, etc. are a vast field of study by themselves. All that constitutes a very wide field of research. Just now only a beginning has been made. It is a field which can involve much investigation of will and attention. The American psychologists are probing into this field but they have a basic handicap—they lack an inner cultural sympathy with the subject. The Indian psychologist has that sympathy, if he would seek to study it. And the importance of this subject is a wide cultural one, vitally connected with our present-day civilisation.

2

The rise of interest in Meditation in the West is a matter of special interest for our discussion of Psychology Western and Eastern. Interest in meditation has arisen in the West as a cultural need of the present, the need for inner peace and quietude, for freedom and detachment, for a deeper self-satisfaction. And it has made indeed a wide appeal, so much so that it was talked of as a popular craze.

We normally think of it as an occasional exercise in self-collectedness, in withdrawal from external preoccupations, in a search for inner joyfulness or as an attempt to recover from distractedness caused by heavy and varied external pressures. It is indeed useful as such an exercise.

But, culturally speaking, its value is much greater as a way of life itself. A way of life of concentration, of self-awareness, of collectedness, of dedication, of hopefulness, of faith in oneself and the world and of peace and restfulness. The ordinary superficial way of life, on the other hand, is one of hurry, of rush, of clutching at results, of tension, competition and strained activity, of exaltation and frustration, of external necessities and compulsions.

Evidently the meditative way has a great cultural appeal in the West and it meets a real need of life.

The occasional exercise, even when done daily, needs to be developed into a normal attitude of life. Then it will have its full effectivity.

We may recall in this connection that the Gita recognises Dhyana Yoga as a complete alternative method along with other yogas, for self-regeneration and self-perfection.

The impact of this wide popular appeal of meditation has been on academic psychology too and psychologists have tried to measure and ascertain the effects of meditative states on physiological conditions of pulse-rate, etc. as also on attitudes and other psychological factors. And these studies have, on the whole, supported the popular feeling for meditation.

We have stated earlier that meditation is of many forms and degrees. It is in fact a very large field of inquiry and study. Peacefulness, a transient bit of it, on the surface of consciousness is the very minimum of it. A meditation in the depth at the level of the psychic being has a different quality. It is then that quietude at the surface tends to become normal. Again, meditation at the level of the higher planes and intense illuminations has a further different quality. All these constitute wide and varied fields of meditation.

The Existentialist philosophy of Heidegger and Sartre and others is a sad commentary on the conditions created by industrialised living. But it is a question to consider whether the difficulties lie with the physical conditions or with the way in which we take these conditions. Supposing we took life, whatever it be, meditatively, with the best possible self-composure, peace, detachment, will

it make a difference or not? In fact, if we could tap the inner joy of the psychic centre, even a little of it, the anxiety of life will lose its force and impact.

In India, Dr. H.C. Ganguli (Delhi University) has felt drawn to study meditation as an altered state of consciousness. He has worked out a Monograph on it too. Therein he says, "For the modern man meditation not only seeks to provide a non-invasive, non-pharmacological device for symptom relief, but also serves as an aid for attaining a higher level of self-actualization and psychological maturity." (Monograph, p. 26)

Psychosynthesis in America

Roberto Assagioli, an Italian psychiatrist and psychologist, who was born in Venice in 1888 and who died in 1975, happily struck upon synthesis as the key to the problem of neurosis and other mental disorders. Indeed, synthesization or integration is the aim of all mental therapies. Freud aims at digging up the childhood memories through Free Association and Dream Interpretation, but the purpose of it all is a recomposition or reintegration of personality into a socially passable form. Jung's Analytical Psychology is in spirit analytical though it affirms a centre or Self as its main fact. In therapeutic practice, whereas Freud aims at childhood memories, Jung aims at the archetypes of the collective unconscious including the one of the Self.

In fact, the general spirit of science is analytical, of looking to the parts, of reducing the phenomenon under investigation to its antecedents. It is only recently that a trend has come into being, which recognises wholes as significant facts by themselves and seeks to study their properties and looks upon analysis of the parts as subordinate factors.

Assagioli was indeed happy to think of synthesis as the direct and positive objective of cure and analysis as a subordinate activity. Freud would raise the unconscious causes of conflict to consciousness and that would automatically bring about a reorientation or reintegration. But such recomposition was an effect, not a direct objective. Assagioli made this recomposition the direct objective and then planned his therapeutic proceedings appropriate to each patient. There is an evident truth and force in the standpoint. Indeed, reintegration of a fractured personality is the aim of all psychotherapy. However, analysis was the power and the bias of science and psychotherapies in variant forms adopted the same with differences in the details of their orientations. They do, however, admit synthesis too in their general approach of analysis in variant forms and degrees.

But Assagioli has the merit of espousing synthesis as the main conscious purpose and yet employing analytical procedures in its service as needed.

In this attempt the lowest and the most original thing done by him is the attitude taken towards the unconscious, personal or collective. His central

emphasis is on building up the will for health and happiness in the patient and in the course of this process whatever comes up or rather intrudes upon the consciousness from the unconscious is to be dealt with, but no direct attempt is to be made to unearth the unpleasant things from the unconscious, personal or collective.

Psychosynthesis is one of the many techniques current in America.

Concluding Observation

America is evidently a wide field for new ideas and new ventures, for trial and experimentation. In the field of psychology behaviourism is no doubt the dominant trend, but along with it there exist the foregoing trends too. They all jostle with one another and throw up things which need longer experimentation and promise more worthy consequences.

INDRA SEN

I ASK THEE

A QUESTION—

Whom to ask but you my nearest own?
 I suffer a Conscience dotted with doubts,
 Scarred and pock-marked from uncured suspicion.
 Beauty is a mirage to me, non-existent imagery.
 Claims and counter-claims are constantly put in
 By variegated ambitions and desires.
 I appease one; thousands throng in, enticed,
 Leaving me lost at the mercy
 Of an unplinthed pillar and a powerless post.
 But why? that is my quandarous query.
 Reveal the reason why my being's impudent part
 Engulfs the unspoilt whole.
 A cancerous rot set in at one point
 Spreads and spreads eating up those live cells:
 Reliance and trust in the Divine dispensation.

DEBANSHU

DOWN THROUGH HISTORY

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

SUCH is the opening gambit of Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*—unique for its immense sweep of the historical vision. Our historical imagination takes wings and all the rhythms and oscillations of Time begin to unfold before us. But the line holds in balance two opposite movements of Time—its irreversibility and perpetual recurrence. On the one hand what has once been experienced will never be experienced again and, on the other, day and night appear and reappear inevitably, seasons return and Gods awake and lapse into sleep like the oscillations of a pendulum. Dawn succeeds to dawn and yet as Heraclitus observes in one of his most inspiring apophthegms, "It is a new sun that rises every day." Or again "In the same stream of life we cannot bathe twice" for new water has rolled in and the bather though same in appearance is not the bather who took a dip yesterday. 'Seasons return' but not to blind Milton returns

Day, or the sweet approach of eve or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.

(Paradise Lost, Book III)

The world that has been seen once, observes Oswald Spengler, can never again be seen. Each culture has its own *Weltanschauung*, its own conception of the world, its own perspective of Time and history. "It is we Germans who invented the clock," says he with pride, "that dread symbol of the relentless flow of Time."

Now we can for a while leave aside "It was", that is to say the irreversible nature of historic time and focus our attention on the "hour before the Gods awake", the hour when

The brief perpetual sign recurred above

(Savitri, p. 3)

Again the juxtaposition of two opposing movements—the sign though brief is perpetual and its signal a recurrent phenomenon. This tension generates sequences of similarities and contrasts right through the epic which is a legend and a symbol. And it will be my endeavour to show how this single line—momentous and paradoxical—anticipates all the different philosophies of history from Spengler and Toynbee to the radicals of our own time who tend to think of our lives as being a discontinuous sequence of immediate experiences and, as Northrop Frye observes, "...the more intense the immediate experience, the

more obviously its content in past and future drops away from it.” (*The Utopian State of Mind*)

Sri Aurobindo himself gives a fuller amplification of the psychological matrix of that hour, in Book Ten, Canto One, p. 601 of *Savitri*:

There is a morning twilight of the gods;
 Miraculous from sleep their forms arise
 And God's long nights are justified by dawn.
 There breaks a passion and splendour of new birth
 And hue-winged visions stray across the lids,
 The dreaming deities look beyond the seen
 And fashion in their thoughts the ideal worlds
 Sprung from a limitless moment of desire
 That once had lodged in some abysmal heart.

The first celebration of such a moment in history we find in the exhilarating experience of the hopes kindled by the French Revolution in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Book XI: 105-121—

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
 For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven! O times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance!...
 Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth
 The beauty wore of promise—that which sets...
 The budding rose above the rose full blown.

“Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth.” Though Wordsworth does not accept the existence of “favoured spots on Earth” he gives a special significance to such moments in Time and calls them “spots of time”.

There are in our existence spots of time,
 That with distinct pre-eminence retain
 A verifying virtue...

And, as H.S. Davis points out in his essay “Wordsworth and the Empirical Philosophers”, “These special ‘spots of time’ are indeed ‘moments scattered’ among many other moments and tracts of time of a different character. They are not part of the usual texture of experience for which the account given by

empirical philosophers will serve pretty well. And they are distinguished from it above all by their capacity for isolated and instant action, with long continued effects, whereas in other types of experience, effects are dependent upon constant repetition."

Oswald Spengler giving a cosmic dimension to such moments calls them "privileged moments" and for him the whole life-span of a culture—its birth, adolescence, youth, maturity and decay and death—constitutes one indivisible moment, isolated from similar other moments like the monads of Leibnitz who keep their windows shut. Hence for him "reality is the world in relation to a soul,"—but we must shirk these murky epistemological waters and focus on the source and nature of these 'privileged moments' when, according to Nehru, 'History sometimes puts on seven league boots' and new ideas fire men's hearts so forcefully that Victor Hugo observes, "Nothing is more unstoppable than an idea whose time has come". Ideas that to the common man appear as insubstantial airy-fairy things move resistlessly onward and do not rest till they have taken a material shape. What made Spengler see world history not in the conventional time-hallowed way as the continuous threefold development of mankind from Antiquity through the Middle Ages to the Modern Age but as the discontinuous sequence of finite series of cultures—of formally or (as he puts it) morphologically similar culture-organizations? Morphological similarities can be discerned when cultures are just blossoming and then when they achieve their maturity and then decline. A culture like a plant remains rooted to the 'privileged area' where it takes birth and eventually rigidifies and loses all sap and falls like dead wood. But the appearance of this Goethean 'Urphänomene', i.e. the concrete "fundamental phenomena" of the merely abstract notion of a "history of mankind", remains what Sri Aurobindo calls "a suprarational mystery" and its appearance always inexplicable, unpredictable and unimaginable. No analysis of the prevailing conditions can account for such a vast difference in the qualitative nature of the new advent. Carlyle attacked the prevailing belief that the Time "called forth" the man as if the sticks made the fire. According to Spengler "Cosmic Fear—Weltangst—is surely the most creative of all primordial feelings" and thus the ground of all culture. But his first statement of the process gives us a profound insight into the nature of the struggle of the culture to give shape to the chaos out of which it is born. The unconscious serves as the material to be given a significant form and when the form is achieved the culture dies because the soul that gave it life withdraws to its primal state. It is something analogous to the artist's struggle to give shape to the chaos of feelings, ideas and sights and insights jostling in his psyche and the death of the culture is the exhaustion of the creative oestrus. As W.B. Yeats says:

The painter's brush consumes his dream

(*Two Songs from a Play*)

J.P. Stern sums up Spengler's whole perspective thus: "But the living being of such culture—that series of epochs which circumscribe the attainment of its inherent perfection—consists of a passionate inward struggle aiming at the outward assertion of the germinative idea against the process of chaos outside and the unconscious within, an unconscious which acts as a sort of fifth column for those hostile forces. Just as the artist struggles against the resistance in the material and the annihilation of the idea that inspires him, so each culture stands in a profoundly symbolical relationship with the matter and the space in which and by means of which it must set about realizing itself. Once the goal is achieved, once the idea—the plenitude of its inner potentialities—is achieved, the culture rigidifies and dies off, its blood runs thin, its strength wanes: it turns into a *civilization*. In this form like a withered giant in a primal forest, it may stand many centuries more, overshadowing everything around it with its rotting dead trunk and boughs." This phenomenon Spengler calls "pseudo-morphosis"; the example he offers is the civilization of Imperial Rome overlaying the young Arabian and early Christian culture and robbing it of air and light. ("The Weltangst of Oswald Spengler" by J. P. Stern, *T.L.S.*, October 10, 1980.)

But if this formative power arises mysteriously out of the inconscient and after reaching its fruition sinks back into it then we have to accept Sri Aurobindo's standpoint that this inconscient which can create such marvels as the great cultures of the world has behind it some superconscient that works with a somnambular certainty of touch.

What stark Necessity or ordered Chance
 Became alive to know the cosmic whole?
 What magic of numbers, what mechanic dance
 Developed a consciousness, assumed a soul?

The darkness is the Omnipotent's abode,
 Hood of omniscience, a blind mask of God.

(*'The Inconscient'*, *Collected Poems*, p. 133)

But this again is, in Sri Aurobindo's Vision, only half the truth. There are descents from the higher planes, manifestations of new truths and greater powers, self-transfigurations giving rise to novelty and endless variety on each sector of evolution—the cosmological that is the inorganic, the biological that is the organic, and the human or psychosocial.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

(Courtesy: *Srinivantu*)

TINY BOAT

VERY tiny indeed is my boat!
It can hold no more
than me and my Boatman.
Tiny indeed is my boat!

If by chance a passenger I take
At once my boat ships water
and sinks in the sea.
If just one passenger I take!

Whenever a curtain drops between me and my Boatman
The oar snaps, the rudder breaks,
the boat goes out of control in a trice.
Whenever a curtain drops between us!

But when I sit with my Helmsman, face to face,
The boat spreads its wings
and joyfully sails undeterred by the waves.
When my Helmsman I face!

I am the sole traveller here.
Handling the oar, the rudder and the sail,
Alone He guides the boat—
He, the Lord of life's ocean.

If I glance at Him whole-heartedly,
Happily my Helmsman takes me across.
He does not ask for a fee.
If only my heart glances at Him!

BIRENDRA SEKHAR PALIT

(Translated by Aniruddha Sarkar from the original Bengali)

THE SQUARING OF THE CIRCLE

THE ETERNAL CHILD AND THE ETERNAL MARVEL

O: Without End or Beginning

THE guide pointed to a dark spot on the rocky wall at the far end of the valley we had just reached: a tiny valley perched like a nest above a huge ravine which here cut into the mountain-side. My heart gave a leap: the climb, the thin air of these high altitudes, the beauty of the Himalayan landscape we had been passing through—coloured rocks, steep slopes covered with flowers, and far below the emerald thread of the river—absorbed my attention so entirely that I had almost forgotten the goal of my long pilgrimage.

We entered the valley across a bridge of ice, over the torrent. Now the cave could be seen clearly. It occupied almost half of the hillside, outlined like a Roman basilica at the head of that little valley encircled by mountain-peaks, cut off from the rest of the universe.

*Was it the end of the world
or its beginning?*

Amarnath, seat of Immortality, the retreat to which Lord Shiva withdrew long ago in the distant Satya-Yuga, the Age of Gold, in order to learn this secret upon earth and to impart it to his spouse, Parvati, Nature, the Mother of the Universe.

I bowed down before the immense Shiva-Linga, and laid my brow upon the ice at the base of the stalagmite.

It had snowed just after I arrived, and a slight earth-tremor sent huge rocks hurtling with a thunderous roar down the opposite mountain-slope.

Three days were passed around the fire with sadhus, until the Full-Moon Day arrived. A line of pilgrims, looking like ants in the distance, wound in at the valley's foot. They climbed up, remained for a few moments, exhausted and overwhelmed, within the sanctum, then departed. The sky was blue at last. Some black birds like crows flew by; and from time to time, white doves melted into the blue.... I remembered what I had once read on a gate in Rome called *Porta Alchemica*: "*Quando in domu tua....*" it said in Latin, "When in your dwelling-place, black crows are changed to white doves, then you will have attained Wisdom"—"*tunc vocaberis sapiens.*" And this cave-mouth resembled a huge gate, an archway; and the curved line of its roof, its vault, when seen from a different angle, from outside, altered: the arch became square. Was this *the squaring of the circle?*

I entered into meditation; and on that day—July 12th, 1981, *guru-purnima*

—the Great God Shiva manifested himself in the cave of Amarnath, teaching once more to man the secret of his eternal yoga. The blue sky widened and the cave stretched to immense proportions. I felt his Force pouring into me. I think I closed my eyes (probably it was unnecessary): from the base of the spine to the crown of the head, a column of transparent, compact, crystalline energy transmitted to the body the teaching of the Lord of Transmutation, message of immortal life, in the form in which it has been worshipped since time immemorial in the lap of the Himalayas, at the sacred cave of Amarnath—the Self of Light, *jyotir-liṅgam*.

The following day, I set off on my return. After a long unbroken journey I reached again my own 'cave' in the South, at the far end of India, to pursue there, like Agastya in former days, a process of spiritual alchemy in the heart of Matter.

But a new story, or a new unveiling of a very ancient lore, awaited me there, after that magical full-moon. A series of beings came to show me the course and the stages of a path followed long before, from the distant days when the Solar Truth reigned over a happy Earth, through the ages when stones prayed and bronze sang a hymn of victory, to the dark moment when the iron of Mind shattered the antique dream of beauty. Narada, Ramses, Midas, Paris, Faust came and brought me a clue of enchanted memory threading through the ages which link the hell of our present existence with the distant paradise of a forgotten Truth....

But was it not this same truth which is today knocking—and how forcefully, with what divine violence! —on the doors of the old world, to destroy the concrete ramparts of the metropolises of Mind; to lead us, even by the obsolete path of Science, to the discoveries of that ancient alchemy and its hidden revelations; to fix us, like the desert Sphinx, with its ineluctable gaze and pose us the ultimate question...which was, perhaps, man's original riddle.

Is it the End or the Beginning?

Perhaps both at once, as in that equally eternal image of the serpent which bites its own tail...

Or perhaps... and even while the crumbling Tower of Babel shook the cracked and grimy plaster of the numberless slow spirallings of human evolution, there appeared to me—linking the ancient Satya-Yuga to the yet-unknown marvel of the new world beyond Man—like the lingam of Mahadeva whose end and beginning even the gods could not discern, an immense Tower of Light, Truth-energy, that sustains the worlds and the ages, and is now bringing back to the Earth, our primordial Paradise, the lost truth which has always been hers; and to the soul which inhabits her and has clothed itself in a human form throughout the fleeting millennia of the history of Mind, the sunlit glory

of a new form, light, luminous, love-transparent, free:

its true *form, morphé, rūpa,*

which in the ancient Indian and Greek tongues signifies

Beauty.

(To be continued)

(Translated by Shraddhavan from the original French)

B. PETRIS

FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

10. MY INSPIRING COLLEAGUES

BEHIND my thick glasses lurk two prominent eyes always on the alert. I am a keen observer.

My ears are always open. Poor appendages! They are, unlike eyes and mouth, not blessed with lids and lips. But I am all ears and my ears are sharp.

The only organ in my head I try to keep shut is my mouth. I am a silent listener to every conversation. My lips part only when there is a necessity. Oh, is that the reason why I speak to you through a pen?

I study men and, of course, women—all those I have close contact with. I greatly admire the adage ‘Every man is a novel if you know how to read him.’

As I spend seven solid hours of a day (from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.) with my students and colleagues, I am privileged to study them. It is a pleasant experience indeed, which I would very much like to share with you.

Even as I write now impressions crowd my memory. My pen struggles to cope with the speed of the dictates of the writer in me. Since the topic is good enough to churn out a pillow-like book, I would like to restrict this piece to only three of my colleagues who have already become raw-material to my writings.

An immediate senior of mine in the B.A. class in my college days and now a colleague has provided me with ample raw material (of course, without his knowledge) on which I built a novelette of about sixty typed pages.

(2)

He is a most delightful man full of humour. We feel his absence very much when he is not in the department. In fact, he is its “very salt of existence”. He speaks ill of others, of course, but not behind their backs as many others do. He does it face to face... without any malice. We laugh with him and on certain occasions at him.

‘Easter Coke’ instead of ‘East Coker’, ‘The Carol Island’ instead of the ‘The Coral Island’, ‘thorax’ instead of the ‘stomach’ and so on may be slips of the tongue to any other colleague. But to him they serve as grist to his mill of jokes. Many of the colleagues are afraid of him for he is always ready to pounce on their slips. When we are tired and exhausted after an hour of lecture, his verbal jigs are something more than a cup of hot tea.

The only vice I see in him is his great belief—the belief that drinking is absolutely harmless unless discontinued. He is as crazy as a bedbug, as far as drinking is concerned. And he believes that drinking gives him “some false sense of security”. Behind every man, there is an untold sorrow. That is why he likes to put himself on a liquid diet.

He is short of stature and he is short-tempered. Anything that he does not like will infuriate him. When he loses his patience he speaks in bilingual sentences. And when he uses only English words, we can be quite sure that his anger has reached its zenith. Very apt words will pour from his mouth in a lovely accent. Minutes later he will cool down. In an apologetic tone, he would say: "You may find my manner annoying, but what can you do about it?"

To be sure, he does not make any particular effort to display his good points and simply lets people take him as he appears, so that in general he is less appreciated than he might be. But I, who have seen the deeper side of his nature, know what an unusual person he really is. And that is the inspiration behind my novelette 'The Diary of Professor B—' which is yet to see the light.

Second in the list of my inspiring colleagues is a talkative man.

You can clamp shut the entire world but all your attempts will prove to be a fiasco if you try them on him. No doubt, he is a Know-All. He can speak on any subject of common interest with enough confidence. But his voice...it is a double-edged weapon. It has the magic spell of lulling the listeners to sleep. It also has the power to jar on the ears, thereby making the listeners run amuck. Hence half his time is spent in telling people what a clever man he is.

Apart from talking which he loves, and nothing on earth can prevent him, he likes to read. Sometimes in the department he would sit glued to his chair and conveniently forget himself in a borrowed newspaper unaware of fleeting time.

"Mr. S—! You have a class now," one of the colleagues would pull him back to the world of reality.

"Now? ...I don't think so," that is his usual reply.

"If you believe in the department time-table, you have a class now."

"Is it so? What day is today?" he would ask tapping his head.

"Wednesday."

"Wednesday! So yesterday must have been Tuesday." Professor S—would coolly remark. Then he would pull out a drawer of his table and look at the time-table half the size of a postcard pasted to its inside. "My class is only in the second period," he would say as if the other had been at fault and had mercilessly disturbed his reading.

"Yes. It's already the second period... Five minutes have passed." He would hear his colleagues at leisure shout in a chorus, their faces lit with mischievous smiles. And that would make him rise to his feet in a hurry.

My short story 'The Professor' (the title is tentative) awaiting publication is built on his absent-minded activities.

Finally I would like to include one more who has inspired many of my poems, for he is always worried over his problems.

Speak to him about the terrorism that is haunting this world. Speak to him about the problems of Sri Lankan Tamils. Speak to him about poverty. He would remain undisturbed. If at all there is any response from him, it would be "There

are too many mosquitoes in my area,” or “There is not enough air in the back wheel of my moped.”

“What a pleasant place this would be,” he once opined, “if out of the twenty four hours in a day, eight were devoted to rest, the next eight to sleep and the remaining eight to intensive eating.”

He is a slow eater. The digestion takes place in his mouth, while with others it is in the stomach.

As his mind is overcrowded with personal problems, he is quite often found talking to himself. I have overheard many of his soliloquies. And here is one for you:

“What uniformity is there in the days of the month? One has 31 days, the other 30, yet another 29 and sometimes even 28. In my opinion a week must consist of only 5 days and they may be called: Thinkday, Actday and Workday. The other two may be called Holiday and Restday.

“That makes it simpler. So five days make one week; four weeks make one month and ten months one year.

“And what do we gain by this new system? Babes would remain in their mothers’ womb for one full year. Apart from that the grown-ups too will have the satisfaction and happiness of living longer.”

Oh, what a fantastic idea! If such a soliloquizer can’t inspire and give cerebral pleasure, who else can?

P. RAJA

TRAVELOGUE

JAPAN—II

WHEN Sanat's brother was posted as the Indian Ambassador in Tokyo I hoped to get a lot of information about Japan. But alas! by that time he had become a diehard Diplomat interested only in his own country's diplomatic relations and foreign trade, that is politics and business. He had been ambassador in West Germany just before taking up this new assignment in Japan. The weather in Germany was fine, living conditions excellent. After Bonn the whole family hated hot and crowded Tokyo and this coloured their outlook on Japan. They became biased and prejudiced and failed to see the beauty and charm of the land. One of the boys commented, "Oh, you know, aunty, in Germany it was heaven and in Tokyo it is *patal* (nether world)." "However, there was one point my brother-in-law made that really startled me. He said, "The Japanese aristocracy is truly aristocratic and not shoeshine or *methraj-and-methrani* aristocracy as is prevalent in so many countries today."

Haneda, Tokyo's International Airport, handles 400 flights per day. 24 airlines make use of the airport. It is almost as busy as Heathrow. Or one may say it is trying to beat Heathrow as in population Tokyo has already beaten London. Surface mail, freighters and passenger liners pass through Osanbashi Pier built by the Americans, in Yokohama. Tokyo once upon a time was known as Edo. It was no doubt even in the time of yore a great economic and cultural centre. It was Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu who in 1605 set up his Shogunate in the castle town of Edo, naturally it became the most important in that area. Then with the Meiji Restoration in 1868 the name was changed to Tokyo and the Emperor came to live in it making it his Imperial Capital. Tokyo was destroyed many times by earthquakes and bombs and fires. But on each occasion it rose again stronger and greater. The outside world, when the topic of conversation is Japan, remembers Tokyo and some important places like Yokohama Kobe, Osaka, perhaps Kyoto the ancient capital and of course Mt. Fuji. All else is grey haze and slanting eyes.

The Japanese people are very remarkable. As islanders or for other reasons they had to borrow a lot of things from the Continent. Take for example religion and calligraphy. But once anything is taken from the Continent the Japanese would transform it into something typically Japanese, something their own and looking at it offhand one would fail to see the source. In the modern world they have copied practically everything from Europe and America. In fact whatever Europe and America could produce or invent Japan could copy and reproduce in Japan.

The history of the land has a stamp of its own. The Shogunate, we hear, was an organisation formed when a military class wielded the power of the State

and the Emperor was eclipsed. Feudal Europe too saw the time when the king was a nonentity. Even in war-time he had no army of his own and had to rely on the contributions of the barons. With this apparent similarity there is a world of difference between the Feudal System and the Japanese Shogunate. Europe at one time believed in the Divine Rights of kings yet between this and the way the Japanese hold their Emperors there is absolutely nothing in common. Perhaps the Rana-rule in Nepal can be compared with Japanese Shogunate not in its entirety but in some parts. They say that in 660 B.C. one Jimmu Tenno (Divinely Brave) ascended the throne and was acclaimed the Emperor by most of the Japanese people all over the island. Jimmu Tenno was considered the 5th in the line of the Sun Goddess Ameterasu Omikami. It seems the Goddess instructed her grandson to go down to Earth and rule Japan to which she was giving her blessings—"May the Japanese kingdom last as long as the Earth and Heaven"—and she gave her grandson three regalia: a sword, a mirror and a precious jewel. Japan accepted the new Emperor and he on his side proved a very able ruler and was loved by all, and he conquered Korea. The Koreans were a people much more civilised than the Japanese, and they taught the Japanese many things. Contact with the Continent had been beneficial always for the Japanese. Japan owes a great debt to China also. From the Chinese the Japanese learnt to write; ethics and various sciences also came from them. Even the Japanese Constitution was based on Chinese Statecraft. The Constitution was promulgated by Prince Shotokin in 604.

In 710 Nara was made the new capital and the Emperor came to live there permanently. So far the Emperor and his court had changed their seat every now and then. With the Emperor living there permanently the capital was soon full of beautiful buildings. The city became all colour and gaiety. Improvement followed in every walk of life. The enormous image of Buddha called Daibutsu, the picture of which every art-lover has seen, was built in this period known as the Nara period. The next period known as Fuji was also a very fruitful one and the capital was moved in it to what is known as Kyoto today. Japan became very aristocratic. Then followed the rule of the Shoguns. They made Kamakura their capital but the Emperor went on living in Kyoto. Almost everyone has seen the picture of the exquisitely beautiful temple in Kyoto known as the Golden Pavilion.

The Shoguns came from the military class. Their repulsing an expedition sent by Kublai Khan brought more honour to their name. Following the first batch of Shoguns came the famous Tokugawa Shoguns. This period was again a great period of progress, efficiency and self-sufficiency. In the Golden Age the leaders were called Alexander of the East and Caesar of Japan. The Japanese were happy in their isolated and happy kingdom when came the shock of their life: the coming of Commodore Perry from the United States. He anchored his ships in the harbour and asked for permission to enter the

kingdom which was flatly and imperiously refused. Then a little shelling and bombarding did the trick. A treaty was signed and soon 15 other nations were given permission to enter the Japanese Islands.

Another tremendous day for Japan (so far as its internal politics was concerned) was 1853 when Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu voluntarily resigned. No other man came forward to take his place, so the Emperor took charge. It so happened that the new Emperor was a very efficient man and knew the needs of Japan and the Japanese. He took his capital to Edo and renamed it Tokyo. His son the next Emperor was even more clever. His name was Meiji, and the Meiji Restoration brought Japan unprecedented progress. A new Constitution was drawn up, known as the *Kempeia* and the promise was given for a representative government. The first Diet was summoned in 1890. On the other hand Japan did its utmost to absorb that part of the material advancement and scientific progress of the West which it found necessary to enable it to be on a par with the European Nations. The Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars both brought credit to Japan and raised it to a position where other nations started valuing its friendship. An Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in 1902. Japan was also given Korea, which she had lost some time in the course of her history. The rule of Emperor Meiji was a miraculous one and it brought Japan out of the Feudal Age and made it a modern and powerful nation. Meiji is even today considered a god. His mausoleum is a temple visited and venerated by each and everyone. His Queen Shoken is also there. He ruled from 1852 to 1912. A wonderful parkland surrounds his shrine and all visitors are taken there. The Olympic Games were held in this parkland. It has, they say, 100,000 trees. A beautiful spot in the heart of dusty and over-populated Tokyo.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Living Within: Compiled with an introduction by *A.S. Dalal*, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Publication Department, printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Price: Rs. 35.00

THIS many-sided book is for the growth and mastery of psychological well-being such as would cover inner peace, inner security, confidence and the principle of disciplined thought. It culls extracts from the published works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and constitutes a research into the implications of the Integral Yoga for mental health and psychological progress.

Mental health is the aim of all psychotherapy, but the integral psychotherapy will have to bring a deeper insight into the human consciousness as a whole.

The modern science of psychology is not very adequate in itself and lacks in comprehensive knowledge. It is still young, obscure and limited.

Ira Progoff in his book *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* has made a comparative study of four leading psychologists, Freud, Adler, Jung and Rank, who have searched and worked for the meaning of life. Each has contributed profound ideas of his own. Progoff has said: "We are now in the midst of a transformation affecting the fundamental nature and spirit of psychological work. Depth psychology in particular, by which we mean all the varied theories interpreting the unconscious depths of man, has arrived at conclusions that reverse the major assumptions with which psychology began as a field of modern study."¹ Freud's words are "that almost all the delimitations we have been led into outlining by our study of pathology relate only to the superficial levels of the mental apparatus—the only one known to us."²

Sri Aurobindo's verdict is: "The psycho-analysis of Freud is the last thing that one should associate with yoga. It takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature". The compiler of this book in his introductory chapter explains this point effectively.

Jung, the boldest western psychologist, has gone a little further in the understanding of the self: "The self that encompasses me," he writes, "also encompasses many others.... It does not belong to me nor is it characteristically mine, but it is universal, paradoxically it is the quintessence of the individual and at the same time a continuum for all collectivism". As Ira Progoff says, "Jung's personal experience of the self is, in other words, a symbol that represents the reality of life."

In his illuminative thought-provoking introduction Dr. A.S. Dalal persistently inquires into the conception of the different parts of the normal human nature and the causes of its psychological disturbances and the process of mental healing by a dynamic practice of the Integral Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The author very conveniently shows the essential parts of the being with the words of Sri Aurobindo: "Each plane of our being—mental, vital, physical—has its own consciousness."³

"The body... has its own consciousness, acts from it, even without any mental will of our own and even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about the body-consciousness."⁴ Sri Aurobindo further says, "In many things, in matter of health and illness for instance, in all automatic functioning, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind."⁵

The findings of medical science corroborate the view of Integral Yoga that human suffering and illness are in the very nature of the untransformed vital.

On the issues of the disturbances associated with the mind the compiler says, "One of the chief defense mechanisms is that of rationalisation, by which the mind colludes with the vital in providing specious explanations and justifications for impulses and desires of the vital."⁶

As the Mother observes, "It is only when you have conquered all attraction and all repulsions that you can have a correct judgment. As long as there are things that attract you and things that repel you, it is not possible for you to have an absolutely sure functioning of the senses."⁷

This book consists of seven chapters with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's scintillating words and precious anecdotes. They stress the will to get well, the hope and the joy of discovery and recovery. The anecdotes of the Mother illustrate that all faults are different involvements and fixations. A stepping-back, a detachment, a contact with the inner joy and the higher peace are the best ways of release from the involvements and the fixations.

The book begins with methods and principles of Integral Yoga which are of a general nature, and will be a great help for attaining positive well-being. Such methods and principles are expressed in different subtitles: The One Way—Quiet, Calm, Peace; Becoming More Conscious; Observation versus Analysis; Using the Will; Rest and Relaxation; Sleep; Recuperating One's Energies; Detachment and Rejection; Equality.

The second chapter runs with the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo about curing mental disturbances such as Mental Noise, Obsessive and Compulsive Thoughts, Anxiety.

The author very carefully handles the problems of the Vital with extracts from the Mother in the third chapter under the headings of Fear, Boredom and Lack of Energy, Depression, Anger, Haste and Agitation, Feeling of Inferiority, Sensitiveness, Jealousy, Transforming the Vital.

The physical consciousness with its disturbances is rigid and finds it difficult to give consent to be transformed. But the Mother has solved the problem showing "the sunlit path" to overcome them patiently. This chapter contains the subtitles of Rest, Quiet, Good Will, Discipline, Endurance, Preoccupation with Illness, Faith and Suggestions, Medicine, Healing the Nerves.

The section with the heading "The Psychic and Psychical Health" provides as its essential feature "The Psychic-Source of the Inner Well-Being."

The words of the Mother are:

"The psychic is always well-poised. So when it is active and governs the being, it inevitably brings a balance."

The searching reader will find, in the last chapter entitled "Exercises for Growth and Mastery", smaller captions such as "Becoming Aware of Oneself, Self-Observation, Visualisations for Discovering One's Being, Exercising Static Power, Becoming Aware of the Shadow, Mastery Through Attitude, Identification, Widening the Consciousness, Dynamic Meditation, Self-Recollection—Remembering, Using Life as a Mirror, Establishing Peace in the Mind.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has been found useful not only with Individuals but also with groups in actual practice.

Dr. Johnson has said: "If creative writing is like giving birth to a child, the compilation work is like bringing up the child in the proper way which is an arduous task".

Dr. Dalal has not shirked the arduousness. He has given us a most beneficial compilation. His Introduction provides both a guide to it and a direction born of his own varied experience.

NILIMA DAS

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2. *Ibid*, p. 162.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
4. *Living Within, Introduction*, p. XI.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. XV.
7. *Ibid.*, p. XVI.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

(Continued from the issue of October 1987)

SIXTY-SECOND SEMINAR

26 APRIL 1987

WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY FOR INDIA TO DEAL WITH THE INVASION OF THE INFLUENCES OF MODERN EUROPEAN CULTURE ?

Speech by Deepa Hariharan and Somosree Biswas

IN recent times, we have been powerfully invaded by foreign European influences. This started long before when the Britishers were ruling us, but the problem today is more serious because the barriers of distance have been completely removed and, therefore, we are now flooded with the influences not only of English culture but also of many other cultures, especially American and Russian.

There are various ways of culture contacts. Historically the more common ways have been of war and conquest. Every nation passes through a cycle of growth and decline. At the point of its decline it can easily be conquered by some other powerful aggressive nation. And that is how the two national cultures come into contact. This is what happened to India during the British period.

Throughout history, culture contacts have been going on between the East and the West. At present we are concerned with their latest phase, especially with reference to India. So we have to face the question posed for this Seminar: "What is the right way for India to deal with the invasion of the influences of modern European culture?"

In the earlier period during the British rule there was first a widespread tendency, especially among the educated class of Indians, to blindly imitate all aspects of English culture. Afterwards, when a reaction against this tendency started, it took the form of a complete rejection of all English influences as something harmful to the indigenous Indian culture. This was the Swadeshi movement in India at the beginning of this century. But culture contact is not bad in itself because interchange of influences is a necessary part of the growth of life. Still, there is also a danger. We must know the right way of accepting these influences. We cannot allow ourselves simply to get absorbed in foreign influences, losing our own identity. If we don't receive these influences in a proper manner, then we

will become only a type of westernized culture, highly industrialised and materialised. This must not happen, for in such a case we will lose the precious heritage of our great ancient spiritual culture. If this happens, then as Sri Aurobindo says:

“... the future India will be formed in the crude mould of the westernised social and political reformer whose mind, barren of original thought and unenlightened by vital experience, can do nothing but reproduce the forms and ideas of Europe and will turn us all into halting apes of the West.”¹

Each nation develops a distinct culture in order to fulfil a certain mission in the progressive world-movement. As modern European nations are fundamentally materialistic, as ancient Greece was fundamentally rational, so is India fundamentally a spiritual nation. Therefore we must preserve our distinct culture. If we follow European materialism we will be intoxicated by the tremendous success of technology and industrialisation but forget our own soul and spirit. Material gains should not be allowed to ruin us spiritually. We should be aware of our own greatness and find once more our soul.

The first thing that India has to achieve is to recover and manifest her soul. In order to do that we must know India's past and revive the real spirit of her ancient culture.

We should gain back our spiritual strength. This is also what the world needs today. Modern Europe has created a civilisation which is so blindly materialistic that it can destroy itself. At this time, India's role is to come forward and save the world because, as the Mother says, “India alone can lead the world to peace and a new world order.”² In the course of evolution man has reached the rationalistic stage and stopped there. But he must go further. At this point rationalism must take a leap into spirituality. India should be the leader of the coming spiritual age because during her long past history she has amassed a great spiritual strength. At every point in human history that nation which initiates and develops the next higher evolutionary stage is the leader. Modern Europe was the leader of the modern rationalistic age. Now India shall be the leader of the coming spiritual age. Apparently she seems to have lost the vast spiritual force she has amassed, but it is not dead, even though for a period it was covered up by the upsurge of inertia in the nation. If we awaken it from within then we will not only help ourselves but also the world. Therefore it is now that we must make the choice: should we become merely an imitation of western culture or should we recover our true Indian culture and raise it to a yet greater glorious height? The British rule was a period of decline of India. But now, again she is awakening. The West is turning to her for help on the path of future evolution.

¹ *Ideals and Progress* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 16), pp. 327.

² *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 13, p. 361.

At this time we must not lose our spirituality by becoming Europeanised. When they are turning towards us for guidance, we must not lose our light. Sri Aurobindo says that if this happens it would be "a tragic irony of fate."¹ India has the light, and therefore she should guide the world. She knows the aim and purpose of evolution. This knowledge has always been hers. As Sri Aurobindo observes:

"Indian culture recognises the spirit as the truth of our being and our life as a growth and evolution of the spirit. It sees the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the All; it sees this as the secret highest Self of all, this is what it calls God, the Permanent, the Real, and it sees man as a soul and power of this being of God in Nature. The progressive growth of the finite consciousness of man towards this Self, towards God, towards the universal, the eternal, the infinite, in a word, his growth into spiritual consciousness by the development of his ordinary ignorant natural being into an illumined divine nature, this is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence."²

"India must be saved for the good of the world,"³ says the Mother. India must defend herself against this raw and crude western civilisation. This is not to put forward a negative view of western civilisation. It certainly has many elements which are useful for the future. But these elements should be accepted in a proper way. Sri Aurobindo puts forward the synthetic view. In the synthesis each element must be given its proper place. Matter should be evaluated as the instrument of the Spirit. In other words, all the elements have to be centred round the Spirit. They should help to manifest the Spirit. In this way there will be further evolutionary growth.

The real growth of every individual or nation comes from within, but it also needs a dynamic interchange of influences from the environment. So both are necessary. Outward influences stimulate the inner growth. Therefore, according to Sri Aurobindo, the right way in which India should face this problem of invasion of European influences is to awaken from within the spiritual flame and to assimilate the external European influences by recasting them according to her own characteristic nature. In this way, in every sphere we should create new forms of our national life.

We shall end our talk with an Invocation which the Mother made on 15 August 1947, in order to give us the strength to face the present emergency:

"O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who hast never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from

¹ *On Himself* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 26), p. 412.

² *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 14), p. 155.

³ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 13, p. 361.

thy voice, served other masters and denied thee, now when they have arisen and the light is on thy face in this dawn of thy liberation, in this great hour we salute thee... Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the way of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples.”¹

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 360.
